

CASTELVETRO
ON THE ART OF POETRY

An Abridged Translation
of Lodovico Castelvetro's

Poetica d'Aristotele
Vulgarizzata et Sposta

With Introduction and Notes

BY

ANDREW BONGIORNO

medieval & renaissance texts & studies
Binghamton, New York
1984

© Copyright 1984

Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies
State University of New York at Binghamton
Binghamton, New York

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Castelvetro, Lodovico, 1505-1571.

Castelvetro on the art of poetry.

(Medieval & Renaissance texts & studies ; v. 29)

Includes index.

1. Aristotle. Poetics. 2. Poetry—Early works to 1800.
3. Aesthetics—Early works to 1800. I. Bongiorno, Andrew,
1900— II. Aristotle. Poetica. III. Title. IV. Series.

PN1040.A53C37

1984

808.1

83-17286

ISBN 0-86698-063-6

Contents

Preface	XI
Introduction	XIII

Part I: General Theory of Poetry

1. Poetry and History	3
2. Plot the Peculiar Concern of Poetic Theory	5
3. Poetry is Imitation	6
4. Poetry and Painting	9
5. Imitations Require Metre	10
6. Medleys of Prose and Verse	12
7. On Dialogues	13
8. Metre Does Not Make the Poem or Determine its Species	16
9. History and the Arts and Sciences Not Fit Subjects for Poetry	17
10. Metre Conceded to Oracles	20
11. Poetry Imitates Three Kinds of Men	21
12. The Species of Poetry Determined by the Social Station of its Characters	22
13. History May Deal with Other than Human Actions	24
14. Analogy with Painting	26
15. The Modes of Imitation	27
16. The Five Kinds of Speakers in Narrative Poems	30
17. The Modes of Imitation Reconsidered	31

Part II: The Origin of Poetry in General and of its Species

1.	The Inventors of Poetry	36
2.	Poetry and Madness	37
3.	Two Kinds of Poets	41
4.	Poets Not Imitators in Aristotle's Sense	42
5.	Native Genius and Art	43
6.	Imitation as a Source of Pleasure	44
7.	Poetry and Painting Do Not Yield the Same Pleasure	46
8.	The Inventors of the Species of Poetry	48

Part III: Tragedy

1.	The Definition of Tragedy	52
2.	The Qualitative Parts of Tragedy	58
3.	The Quantitative Parts of Tragedy	61
4.	The Relative Importance of the Qualitative Parts	64
5.	The Plot and its Eight Requirements	72
6.	Recognition and its Means	118
7.	Complication and Resolution	134
8.	The Solution of Difficulties	137
9.	The Unhappy Ending	144
10.	Tragic Pleasure and the Spectacle	148
11.	Happiness and Misery as Ends of Tragedy and Comedy	151
12.	Plots and their Emotional Effects	153
13.	Actions and Sufferings of Tragic Agents	156
14.	Tragic Character	161
15.	Circumstances that Render Incidents More or Less Piteous and Fear-Inspiring	175
16.	Thought	183
17.	Language	188
18.	The Chorus	207
19.	The Prologue	209
20.	The Four Species of Tragedy	212

Part IV: Comedy 213

Part V: Epic Poetry

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. How Epic Poetry Resembles Tragedy | 220 |
| 2. Epic Poetry and Tragedy: Plot, Language, and Metre | 238 |
| 3. How Epic Poetry Differs from Tragedy | 248 |
| 4. Faults to be Avoided by Epic Poetry and Tragedy | 255 |
| 5. Nomenclature | 266 |

Part VI: The Defense of Poets

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Three Defensible Objects of Imitation | 272 |
| 2. Acceptable and Unacceptable Errors | 277 |
| 3. Errors in the Art of Poetry | 283 |
| 4. Impossibilities | 286 |
| 5. More on the Defensible Objects of Imitation | 290 |
| 6. Impossibilities, Improbabilities, Contradictions | 300 |

Part VII: Whether Epic Poetry or Tragedy
Is the Superior Type

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Epic Poetry to be Ranked above Tragedy | 306 |
| 2. Arguments for Superiority of Epic Poetry Refuted | 310 |
| 3. Tragedy to be Ranked above Epic Poetry | 313 |

Notes 323

Indices 369

Acknowledgments

Both in making the translation and in writing the introduction and the notes I have frequently consulted with profit, which I gladly acknowledge, Allan H. Gilbert's translation of selected passages of Castelvetro's *Poetica* in his *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*; H. B. Charlton's *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry*; Baxter Hathaway's *The Age of Criticism*; Renato Barilli's chapter on Castelvetro in his *Poetica e Retorica*; R. Bray's *La Formation de la Doctrine Classique en France*; and Bernard Weinberg's *History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*. I am happy to offer my thanks to the officials of the Harvard Library for permission to use the library's great resources in the preparation of the notes and to the University of Illinois Library for a number of interlibrary loans. I am deeply indebted to Scott Elledge of Cornell University for his friendly interest in the publication of my book and to Mario A. Di Cesare and his staff at Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies for expert and always generously given editorial assistance. For the two indices, I am particularly indebted to Dr. Nancy Doolittle, who undertook the difficult task with care and devotion. My wife's reading of the proofs has been only the latest of her many manifestations of concern for the progress of my work. I think back with affection and gratitude to my master Lane Cooper, who supervised my first efforts in translating and editing Castelvetro.

Preface

As its title indicates, this book has not been designed for readers who desire to know Castelvetro as a commentator on Aristotle's *Poetics*. That knowledge would require a study of Aristotle's text and of the whole of Castelvetro's translation and exposition of it. The book I offer contains only as much of Castelvetro's commentary (something like one half) as I believe will serve for the comprehension of his conception of the art of poetry. But the book that expounds the art of poetry is at the same time (as Castelvetro understood the *Poetics* to be) an "art" in the sense of a manual for both poets and critics, and might accordingly have been given the title of *Castelvetro's Art of Poetry*. But though clearly Castelvetrician in either sense, the book contains a considerable number of Aristotelian elements. Castelvetro is best understood when he is known to have achieved independence from Aristotle after long study of the *Poetics*. For this reason I have taken pains in the notes to show where he has intentionally or unintentionally diverged from him.

Castelvetro divides the *Poetics* into six principal parts (*parti principali*) and subdivides each of them into a number of sections (*particelle*) of various lengths. Each section consists of a passage of the *Poetics* followed by a summary of its content; the summary is followed by Castelvetro's translation of the text and by his commentary. The commentary usually begins with a consideration of the quoted passage as a whole and continues with detailed considerations of some of its parts, which may be a single word, a phrase, a clause, or more. Most sections which form the chapters of my translation consist of commentaries on these parts. The first line of each contains in square brackets the reference to the Romani edition of Castelvetro, and most of them contain in parentheses a reference to the chapter, page, and line or lines in the *Poetics* from which the part under consideration has been taken. Sometimes I have translated the part in question from Castelvetro's Italian rendering of the Greek and have incorporated the translation into the first paragraph of the section. In these translations the words in brackets are words which Castelvetro added to his transla-

tion as a means of clarifying the text. Many of my chapters contain sections from earlier or later parts of the commentary because they treat of matters that can logically be grouped with the matter treated in the sections of which the chapter is composed.

Before he devoted himself wholly to literary and linguistic studies Castelvetro had been a student of the law in Bologna, Ferrara, Padua, and Siena (he held a doctorate of laws from Siena), and his style shows every sign of much reading in the law and long association with its votaries. His sentences are generally long, so long that I have found it desirable to divide some of them into two or more, and so prolix that I have not hesitated at times to delete superfluous words, phrases, and clauses, and occasionally even a whole sentence when it did no more than repeat what had already been adequately said. Castelvetro quotes rather frequently from the poets. Where the poet's exact words are not necessary to the argument I have simply given the reference to their source and the briefest possible paraphrase of their sense. As for the numerous tables in which Castelvetro summarizes an argument extending over many preceding pages, I have eliminated all of them as not indispensable.

I had completed the translation of the text before I saw for the first time Werther Romani's magisterial two-volume edition of Castelvetro's book. In the final revisions of the translation I profited greatly from Romani's painstaking collation of the 1570 and 1576 editions, and I found his exhaustive and always accurate index an invaluable resource in writing my introduction. My Italian quotations from Castelvetro's *Poetica* reproduce the spelling and punctuation of the 1576 edition. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the *Poetics* in English are translations of Castelvetro's renderings of the text.

Oberlin, Ohio

ANDREW BONGIORNO

Introduction

In his dedicatory epistle to the Emperor Maximilian II, Castelvetro offers several reasons for undertaking to expound the *Poetics* of Aristotle after that work had been translated or expounded or both translated and expounded by Averroes, Giorgio Valla, Alessandro de' Pazzi, Francesco Robortello, Vincenzo Maggi, Pier Vettori,¹ and Bernardo Segni. One of them is that for all their intellectual acumen and great learning those worthy men had not succeeded in "removing all the difficulties and making smooth all the rough places with which [that] little book abounds," so that without "doing a second time what they had done and repeating what they had said," he could still exercise "the feeble powers" of his own intellect to do much of what they had left undone. Another and perhaps more compelling reason is that all his predecessors, without exception, had mistaken the *Poetics* for a complete art of poetry and had not felt called upon "to do more than explain what they had found written there." Castelvetro, on the other hand, had come to the awareness—he boasts of it as his discovery (*io mi [sono] aveduto*)—that the *Poetics* is not really a book but the "rough, unfinished, and unpolished" draft of one which, having failed to satisfy its author, was laid aside to serve him at a later time as a repository from which to draw materials for the two books of his *Treatise on the Art of Poetry*,² an item in the catalogue of his works at the end of Diogenes Laertius' life of Aristotle. That discovery opened his eyes to the opportunity of doing more than had ever been attempted to serve the needs of both the poets and the critics. None of the earlier commentators, for instance, had done more than to touch lightly and infrequently on the subject of the art of poetry. Castelvetro, on his part, undertook, "perhaps with greater enthusiasm than success," to cast a far stronger light on that art not only by expounding "what that supreme philosopher had left on that subject in the few pages of his *Poetics*" but by writing (i.e., by adding) "as much as should and could have been written to render the greatest possible service to all who would learn how to compose poems skilfully and to judge them correctly." His program, then, would include not only the expan-

sion of the little that Aristotle had written on all the matters touched upon in his "little book," but also the introduction of much new matter of a kind not found there. The resulting work would be only in part a commentary on the *Poetics*; the additional matter would make the complete work an approximation of the lost *Treatise on the Art of Poetry*. Castelvetro's great ambition to recreate Aristotle's lost work is one of the two causes of the extraordinary length of his book (911 pages in Romani's edition). The other is the extraordinary prolixity of his style.

An acquaintance with Castelvetro's ambition could easily predispose a reader to look in his book for a complete and recognizably Aristotelian art of poetry. But any reader so predisposed would soon be disillusioned. Castelvetro's exposition of Aristotle's text bears little resemblance to the one published ten years earlier by Pier Vettori, the only one of his contemporaries whom he frequently refers to by name (and usually to discredit him). Vettori's commentary is the work of a man who possessed not only the scholar's learning and methods but also the will to search out the true meaning of his author's text. To turn from Vettori's commentary to Castelvetro's is to leave "the quiet and still air of delightful studies" for the turbulent atmosphere of acrid controversy. Castelvetro is by temperament less the scholar and critic than the controversialist. He can speak with sincerity of Aristotle, as he does in the dedicatory epistle, as a philosopher supreme among philosophers (*sommo philosopho*) and extol his intellect as not less than superhuman; and in the commentary (p.18) he can admonish critics who dared challenge his authority that he is honored by the world as an oracle of truth (*philosopho verace*) and "cannot be contradicted without diffidence." But Castelvetro is no less sincerely himself when, having said that the pleasure produced by tragic actions is of three kinds, he adds (p.164) that "once we have duly examined them we shall know how little Aristotle understands the nature of tragic pleasure." Castelvetro undertook the labor of composing his commentary not as a humble and dispassionate investigator but as an assured master of the art of poetry, and in his eagerness to expound that art he welcomed every occasion for exposing what he took to be fallacies in Aristotle's arguments and refuting all ideas that did not square with his own. In the end the doctrines he recommends to would-be poets and critics are rarely Aristotle's³. The elements of his system are recognizably Aristotelian; he plainly owes his conception of poetry as imitation and his view of the end of poetry as pleasure to Aristotle, but as he develops those ideas they assume a form that Aristotle could never have found acceptable. They are unlike Aristotle's, and they are unlike most poetic orthodoxies of his time. In a century in which the end of poetry was universally understood to be utility as well as pleasure and Virgil was worshiped as the prince of poets, Castelvetro could stubbornly deny that poetry had any other end than

pleasure and could dare vilify Virgil as a thief (p.105), a liar (p.280) and finally a non-poet (p.249). He was unique among his contemporaries, and the praise he would have relished most would have been the world's recognition of his uniqueness.

It was a generally held opinion in the sixteenth century that the poet was a man apart and that his utterances were of the nature of oracles. Minurno says of him that he is "as it were, a god, or at least a spokesman of the gods, an interpreter of nature, a teacher of divine and human things, a master of the moral laws;" and Scaliger could say that the poet "creates like another God, so that he seems to have been given the same name as God [Maker] not by the consensus of humanity but by the provision of nature."⁴ These and other opinions of the same sort Castelvetro scouts as reflecting the delusions of the ignorant multitude, of men so wanting in intelligence that they could account for the marvelous inventions of the poets only by attributing to them a nature above the human (p.37). To say this is on the face of it to number Plato no less than Minurno and Scaliger with the ignorant multitude, for in the *Phaedrus* (265) Plato discourses on a madness that is divinely bestowed on some, and the poets among them, to accomplish what they could never have accomplished by the exercise of their faculties in their normal state. It is only when the powers of their genius are heightened by this divinely inspired madness that poets can compose their poetry, and this being the manner of its coming into being, poetry must be received as the utterance not of men but of gods. The embarrassment of undertaking a refutation of Plato Castelvetro avoids by confidently asserting that when Plato speaks of divine madness he does so with tongue in cheek, that in the *Phaedrus* specifically he is making use, in the person of Socrates, of a commonly held opinion to support the view that all lovers are madmen, which was the subject under discussion at the time the madness of the poets is introduced into the argument. After all, Castelvetro concludes triumphantly, if Plato believed poets to be divinely inspired, why would he have banished them from his ideal commonwealth (p.38)?

But Aristotle, too, presents Castelvetro with an apparent contradiction. In the received text of the *Poetics*, Aristotle teaches (17.55a 32-34) that the poet must be either a person of excellent natural endowments (*persona fornita di buona natura*) or a madman. Castelvetro accepts the first of the requirements and meets the challenge of the second by rejecting it as the deliberate corruption of the text by ignorant scribes bent on propagating their belief in poetic madness. The text needs restoring to what he conceives to have been its original state, and this he does by emending the scribes' "or a madman" to "not a madman" (p.40). And on a later page, where Aristotle attributes Homer's great sagacity in his handling of the *Odyssey* to "art or nature", he does not fail to observe that Aristotle "does

not recognize madness as the ground of [that sagacity], and if he recognizes no such madness in Homer so much less will he recognize it in any other poet" (p.90). Neither Plato nor Aristotle, then, believed poets to be madmen. The ignorant minds in which the belief originated might have been disabused by the poets themselves, who might have confessed that they had never enjoyed the grace of divine visitations. But such candor would have been hurtful to their reputation; and so, glorying in a delusion thanks to which they were universally revered as darlings of the gods, they fostered it by opening their poems with invocations to Apollo and the Muses, posing before the world as spokesmen of the great divinities whom the world adored (p.37).⁵

The poet, then, must be recognized as a man like other men, enjoying no privileged relationship with supernatural beings. Poetry has always been produced by superior minds properly trained in the art of poetry, and the quality of their poetry has been commensurate with their training. Castelvetro, who quotes rather frequently from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, never quotes the famous dictum *Poeta nascitur non fit*; and understandably, for his conception of the poet and the poetic process is truly expressed by its reverse, *Poeta fit non nascitur*. In the *Ars Poetica* (408ff.) Horace asks whether the good poem owes more to the poet's natural genius or to art, a question to be later asked by Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 2.19) about good oratory. The answer given by both is that neither native genius nor art can function effectively without the aid of the other. This answer draws from Castelvetro the schoolmasterish rebuke that both Horace and Quintilian "speak ineptly of a matter they understand but little" (p.43), after which he proceeds to an argument demonstrating to his satisfaction that the one thing needful to the would-be poet and the would-be orator is art, the art defined by him in an early page of the commentary as "a collection of all the teachings, arranged in proper order, necessary for one to become a good poet without great effort" (*con agevolezza*).⁶ The ancient poets were disadvantaged "in not having an art of poetry in writing" (*l'arte scritta di poesia*) by which they could compose (*regolare*) their poems according to established rules and judge (*essaminare*) them expertly. That art is now available to modern poets, and having it they have "a thread by following which they can never go astray."⁷ Aristotle says (4.49a 9–10) that the first poets were improvisers. But that, Castelvetro replies, is an impossibility, for "nothing can be produced spontaneously but by those who have long practice of the necessary art and have formed the habit of it" (p.42). Aristotle also counsels the poet to work himself into the emotional state of the character whom he is in process of portraying (17.55a 29–32). That counsel Castelvetro finds unnecessary "for the reason that the art of poetry is already in being [*è costituita l'arte della poesia*]. For if the art is complete and its teachings are sound, it is sufficient to teach us how to fashion

every part of a poem, and we need not transform ourselves into other persons or to observe other persons' actions. It is enough that we apply the teachings of the art, otherwise we shall needlessly and unprofitably combine two distinct activities, following the art and engaging in direct 'imitation' (that being the usual name for what we call 'resemblance')" (p.41).

Castelvetro consistently speaks of poetry as an invention. It would be no extravagance to say that he speaks of it as an invention like the wheel and that like the wheel it was invented to perform a specific function. For poetry that function was to provide "pleasure and recreation ... to the souls of the common people and the rude multitude" (p.19). Considered as a sixteenth-century formulation this statement is heretical on two counts: it designates pleasure as the sole end of poetry,⁸ and it singles out the common people as the audience which poetry must be designed to please.⁹ To the literary world of Castelvetro's century it was almost self-evident that poetry was a learned art designed for a learned audience and that its end was not only to please but also to teach.

That pleasing and teaching were the dual end of poetry was one of the firmest literary orthodoxies of the Graeco-Roman critical theory. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Euripides says (line 1009) that the only praiseworthy poets were those whose sage counsels made better citizens, and Aeschylus (lines 1054-55) that boys are taught by schoolmasters and men by the poets. But sixteenth-century Europe owed its generally accepted formulation of the poet's whole duty to Horace, who in his *Ars Poetica* had said (lines 333-34) that the intention of all poets (*volunt poetae*) is to improve their readers or to please them (*aut prodesse ... aut delectare*) or both to improve and please them, adding (line 343) that the most honored poet is the one who has combined utility with delight (*qui miscuit utile dulci*). And in more personal terms Horace also wrote (*Ep.* 1.2.1-4) after a rereading of Homer that he had found Homer superior in moral wisdom to Chrysippus and Crantor, which is to say to any philosopher. Horace obviously most prized the poem that afforded him both delight and wisdom, though it is doubtful that he would have withheld his praise from a pleasing poem that was not designed to improve him. Such tolerance is hardly to be found in the Italian critics of the sixteenth century. Bernardino Daniello insists that the poet's *true* office is "to write things designed to teach and to please. The end to be attained through his writings is equally that of teaching and of pleasing."¹⁰ J. C. Scaliger declares in the very first chapter of his *Poetice* that "the poet teaches and does not simply delight, as some believe." And Benedetto Varchi is so bent on proclaiming the instructional nature of all poetry that he writes as if all poets went about making their poems in the same manner as God did in creating all things in the sublunary world: "All things below the first heaven," he says, "were created and ordered for the use of man, that is, to aid him in the

attainment of his perfection and happiness. Therefore, poetry being one of the things that exist and are made under heaven, we cannot err in asserting that the end of poetry is to make men perfect and happy."¹¹

But Horace was not alone in forming the critical minds of Castelvetro's time. Cicero's rhetorical works were widely read, and from them the critics learned that the perfect orator "teaches and delights and moves (*docet et delectat et permovet*) the souls of those who hear him."¹² Evidently the orator's function is hardly distinguishable from the poet's, and in fact Cicero himself declares in the *De Oratore* (1. 70) that the poet is closely related to the orator (*Est enim finitimus oratori poeta*). Cicero taught Castelvetro's contemporaries to think of poetry as a species of rhetoric. Varchi, for one, learned from him that just as the orator attains his ends through the enthymeme, so the poet attains his through the example: the poem is neither more nor less than the rhetorical example, and, as an example, is designed to convert the mind from error to truth and from vice to virtue.¹³ Minturno spoke as the representative of many when he said, echoing Cicero, that the office of the poet was "to speak in verses to the end of teaching, delighting, and moving."¹⁴ And Daniello spoke as one who had assimilated Ciceronian as well as Horatian doctrine when he wrote that a poem is not completely a poem however beautifully it is wrought; to be complete it must possess, additionally, the power of *persuasion*, "where the whole of a poet's worth and greatness resides."¹⁵

Castelvetro's rejection of half of Horace's doctrine is absolute, and he rejects it all the more confidently because the likes of it had been tacitly rejected by Aristotle, who teaches that every species of poetry affords its peculiar pleasure but never mentions a peculiar utility. To be sure, Aristotle is not consistent throughout. Castelvetro observes that in his effort to contradict Plato, who would have banished tragic and other poets from his ideal commonwealth for the pernicious moral effects of their poems, Aristotle would have given his approval (p.155) to the kind of tragedy that "in his opinion effects the moral improvement of the people (*la quale è di pro a costumare il popolo*) by purging their souls of pity and fear." This, to Castelvetro, represents a departure from the true doctrine advanced in the earlier pages of the *Poetics* and also in a later one (p.156), for when a remark of Aristotle's (23.59a 17-21) gives him the occasion for returning to the subject he says that if Aristotle ever concedes that tragedy may have a certain utility he regards it "as an incidental thing, like the purgation of pity and fear."¹⁶ Surprisingly, Castelvetro himself did not succeed in avoiding this very concession that he attributes to Aristotle, once (p.278) when he speaks with tacit approval of the magistrates who forbid the performance of tragedies and the recitation of epic poems for moral reasons and praises princes and popes for bestowing the laurel crown on poets whose works were judged to be models of moral soundness and technical

proficiency, and again when he states it as a fact that "tragedy is of very great utility to the common people and is greatly favored by democracies, confirming their citizens in the resolve to preserve their liberty and to hate tyrants as unjust men displeasing to God."¹⁷ And he regards as morally beneficial the witnessing of both the unjust sufferings of the good and the fall of the wicked because the first spectacle may teach that all men "are subject to many misfortunes and that no man should rest his trust on the tranquil course of the things of this world" (p.150) and the second may serve to confirm the virtuous in the pursuit of virtue (p.171).

But Castelvetro never plainly affirms that poetry has any other end than that of pleasure. On the subject of utility he is no more Ciceronian than he is Horatian. In his commentary (III.16) he enlarges upon Aristotle's few remarks on rhetoric in the *Poetics* by drawing freely upon Cicero's (as well as Aristotle's and Quintilian's) rhetorical works for his discussion of thought as the third of the qualitative parts of tragedy, but his study of Cicero never converted him to the view that the poet is closely related to the orator or that the poem is by nature a rhetorical example and can perform the function of one. These ideas are not refuted by him; they are simply ignored. Yet the world's nearly universal insistence on the utility of all poetry finally succeeded in drawing from him the admission that poetry may be said to have an *incidental* function which can be called its utility. Castelvetro perhaps never rejected the idea of poetic utility more resolutely than on a page in the posthumous *Opere Varie Critiche* (p. 81), where he accuses Giovan Battista Pigna of having incorporated into his book on *romanzi* three ideas of his without naming him as their author, the second of them being, in his own words (*con mie parole, tralasciando le sue*) "that though poetry may on occasion have its utility, it may nevertheless be confidently affirmed that it never provides utility except incidentally (*per accidente*), but that when it does so the utility proceeds from outside the poem and from the reader's acute discernment and not from within it and the poet's intention." Castelvetro's pronouncement is of considerable value for two reasons. It is intended to state unequivocally that authentic poetry pleases but does not teach, that it moves to pleasure but not to virtuous words or deeds, that it arouses a person's emotions directly, without, so to speak, first passing through his mind, that it adds nothing to the sum of his knowledge and wisdom. And yet here, as in his defense of Aristotle as the exponent of a purely hedonistic poetry, an incidental moral effect is not denied to poetry; the denial of utility is not unqualified by the admission that even when the poem is designed to purvey no more than pleasure, utility may prove to be one of its incidental ends. This may explain why no poems—not Aeschylus' *Oresteia* or Dante's *Divine Comedy*—is ever judged by him to be an inferior poem by reason of its utility. Tolstoy could cry for the expulsion from the literary canon of all

Greek tragedians and of Dante, Tasso, Milton, Shakespeare, Goethe, Zola, and Ibsen as authors whose works were addressed not to the whole of humankind but to an intellectual élite; Castelvetro, whose judgments on most matters could be as passionate as Tolstoy's, never speaks disparagingly of a poem which the world may value for its teachings. The reason can be no other than that, as his own words plainly declare, no such poem exists, though a discerning mind may succeed in drawing from at least some poems a teaching that was never put there by the poet. And this, supposedly, must be assumed to be true even of the *Divine Comedy*, which twice (*Inf.* 9.61-63 and *Purg.* 8.19-21) counsels the reader to look for a spiritual meaning beneath the literal, and of which Dante himself was to write to Can Grande that "the end of the whole and of its parts is to remove the living in this world from a state of misery to a state of felicity."¹⁸ Nowhere else in all his writings is Castelvetro so completely the intractable doctrinaire as in that one sentence provoked by Pigna.

But fortified, as he believed, by two passages in the *Poetics* (1.47b 16-20 and 8.51b 5-7) Castelvetro could act with the resoluteness of a Tolstoy as he expels from the ranks of the poets whole classes of writers whom many generations down to his own had unquestioningly honored as authentic poets. Those whom he names are Nicodemus, Serenus, and Fracastoro as the authors of versified treatises on medicine; Aratus, Manilius, Giovanni Pontano and others as the authors of versified treatises on astronomy; Empedocles and Lucretius as the authors of versified treatises on natural philosophy; Virgil and Hesiod as the authors of versified treatises on the art of agriculture; and Lucan, Silius Italicus, Fracastoro, and unnamed others as the authors of versified histories. The reasons, which he avows "may not be the very ones that led Aristotle to his conclusions" — as they emphatically are not — are three. The first applies only to writers who like Lucan had written history in verse, and it is that though the matter of poetry must be an action resembling a historical event it must not be an event taken directly from history. If it is, the writer can lay no claim to the title of poet, of a person, that is, "who knows how to compose a history which he himself has imagined of things that have never happened and which is no less delightful or less probable than one produced by the course of earthly events or the infinite providence, hidden or manifest, of God" (p.18). Lucan and others who had written histories in verse had shirked the labor of invention, and having failed to prove that they possessed the capacity for inventing fictitious history they cannot be known as good or bad poets, for "the poet is essentially an inventor, and a writer without invention is no poet" (p.105). The second reason applies to writers who like Virgil make the matter of an art, or like Manilius the matter of a science, the subjects of versified treatises. Virgil and Manilius and their likes cannot be admitted to the ranks of the poets because the arts and

sciences have over the years been explored by a great number of scientists and students of the arts and their explorations have yielded an understanding of them that has spread far and wide, so that "for the poet they are subjects of the same order as historical works and as events that have already happened" (p.19). When Virgil, therefore, undertook to treat the art of agriculture and Manilius the science of astronomy in verse they did no more than repeat what others had already discovered and expounded, and their contribution to the enterprise was only language arranged in metrical order. But even if they had expounded in verse matter which they had discovered by their own exertions they still could not be recognized as poets, for they would thereby have proved themselves competent investigators, the one of an art, the other of a science, but not poets, for the poet's true function is to discover the truth not of the arts and sciences but of human actions¹⁹ and through the metrical representation of them to provide pleasure to an audience. But Castelvetro offers a third and more obvious reason why no art or science can form the acceptable subject of a poem, and it is that poetry was invented to supply pleasure and recreation to the common people, none of whom are capable of following the subtle reasonings of philosophers and scientists, and all of whom would not be pleased but annoyed by what they heard. If, therefore, we were to concede that the arts and the sciences could be made the subjects of authentic poems we should at the same time be constrained to make two other concessions, that the true function of poetry was not to give pleasure but to teach and that its proper audience was not the ignorant many but the learned few. It should therefore be the rule for would-be poets to avoid making the matter of an art or a science the subject of a whole poem, and they should also guard against introducing matter of those kinds into any part of one. Lucan and Dante are both guilty of the latter practice, both having made use "of astronomical lore to designate the seasons of the year and the hours of the day and night" (p.20), a fault never met in the Homeric poems or in the *Aeneid*.

The world's misapprehension of the true nature of poetry and of its reason for being has over the centuries (as far back as Hesiod) admitted to the ranks of the poets innumerable writers who cannot be said to have earned the poet's true credentials. Castelvetro's description of those credentials is less than all-inclusive. When he speaks of the nature of poetry he must be understood to speak of the nature of the three kinds to which Aristotle devotes the *Poetics*. Of Aristotle as the author of the *Poetics* he says that "he speaks briefly of lampoons, encomiums, and iambic poetry. He speaks at length of tragedy and epic poetry, and promises to do the same for comedy" (p.49). But why did he restrict himself to only three species of poetry? Because, Castelvetro says, "Aristotle's intention in this book was to treat only the poetry which was performed or recited for the entertainment of

the public in the city squares, i.e., tragedy, comedy, and epic poetry; and ... if he speaks of the other kinds he does so incidentally and to shed light upon those to which the *Poetics* is devoted." And speaking of sixteenth-century usage (and his own) he says, "Generally speaking we group poems under four distinct heads, the first three being comedy, epic poetry, and tragedy, and the fourth odes, epigrams, *canzoni*, and other similar short poems of various kinds" (p.266). Both in Aristotle and in Castelvetro the word "poem" must be understood to designate no other poem than a tragedy, a comedy, or an epic. The fact, incidentally, that all three of these species of poetry are destined for performance in the public squares and the great majority of those who throng to such performances are the ignorant multitude lends plausibility to Castelvetro's assumption that poetry was "invented" for the pleasure and recreation of the common people. This doctrine he stated early on (p.19) in the strongest possible terms, saying that the drama and the stage were invented for the exclusive pleasure of the rude multitude (*per diletto solo della moltitudine rozza*). Very late in the book (p.281) he restates it in less uncompromising terms, saying that the ignorant are "the very public for whom poems are primarily [*principalmente*] composed." But he effectively retracts it later still when, following Aristotle, he considers whether tragedy can produce its proper effect when read as when seen. His answer to this question draws from him the statement that "tragedy was designed for the pleasure of both the learned and the ignorant and was adapted to the understanding of both" (*per diletto et essere compresa dagli 'ntendenti et dagli'ignoranti*) (p.313). Poetry, then, seems to have been designed exclusively for the many, primarily for the many, and equally for the many and the few. The conflict is logically irresolvable and it is best to make no effort at resolving it. Frequent iteration has established it as Castelvetro's unalterable opinion that poetry must be designed to please the many. Two sentences that contradict that teaching must not be allowed to invalidate it.

What, then, is admissible as authentic tragedy, comedy, or epic poetry? Aristotle defines the genus poetry, of which the three kinds named are the species, as imitation (1.47a 13-16). Castelvetro accepts the definition without question and will also accept Aristotle's definition of tragedy (6.49b 24-28), and by implication that of epic poetry and comedy (8.51a 31-34), as the imitation of an action. But he does not find all actions acceptable as proper matter for poetry. A proper action must be a possible or probable action (p.92); it must faithfully reflect events daily observable in the world. "A poem has been correctly made," he says, "when it imitates with metrical language a possible human action that pleases by the novelty of its plot" (p.278). On an earlier page (p.25) he had said that human actions constitute the matter of both history and poetry, but he immediately took care to add, "And when I say human actions I mean also divine actions

... for the common people speak of God and his actions in the same manner that they do of men and the actions of men." God sometimes works his will openly, as when he made the sun stand still to afford Joshua time to pursue the enemy. But he sometimes works in hidden ways, and a poet possessing the acumen to perceive God's hand as the true shaper of an event which others have seen as the effect of visible human causes will not offend against verisimilitude if he represents it as a manifestation of God's will. An example of this is Dante's attribution to the divine will (*Inf.* 2. 23-24) of the foundation of Rome as the city which should one day be "the holy place where the successor of great Peter has his seat" (p.274). On the other hand poetry cannot tolerate the humanly impossible and improbable. Castelvetro pronounces unacceptable the "fantastic episodes" in Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* and "certain books in the Spanish tongue" together with "certain Flemish canvasses" because, though the paintings can be admired for their execution and the fantastic poetry for "the purity of the diction, the ornament of the figures, and the music of the verse", neither the paintings nor the poems can afford the peculiar pleasure that proceeds from imitation, i.e., the imitation of the historically real. The monsters of the Flemish paintings have never existed and are unknown to us, and the fantastic episodes in poetry "are commonly judged by the people to be impossible or improbable" (p.48). They all fail the test of verisimilitude.

The authors of the versified histories and versified treatises on the arts and sciences erred in their efforts to make poetry out of unpoetic matter; Pulci and the authors of the fantastic Spanish books erred in failing to make the world known to sense the sole model of their inventions. The failures of all these writers is attributable to their ignorance of the true nature of the stuff of which poems are made, and though they were all honorable in their intentions their works merit the censure of every enlightened critic. But there is still another class of offenders against the art of poetry, and they are men who deliberately appropriate the matter and the language of other poets. Early in the commentary (p.41) Castelvetro quotes Petrarch to the effect that there are two kinds of poets, the first of which he compares to the silk worm and the second to the bee. The first kind invent their own matter and their own figurative language, the second appropriate the matter and the language invented by others. These last cannot be excused on the score of ignorance; they knew they had made away with what belonged to others, but they shamelessly defended their thefts as legitimate (p.105). They deserve to be severely condemned as thieves, for "if there is one thief who ought never to be spared the world's scorn and condemnation he is the poet who steals another's inventions, for the poet is essentially an inventor, and a writer without invention is no poet" (p.105). Castelvetro names eight such thieves—Boccaccio, Ariosto, Petrarch, Virgil, Plautus, Terence, Seneca, and Apuleius—and says that there are more.

Castelvetro's severity toward their practice is to be explained by the importance attached to invention in his conception of the poetic process. For him to poetize is, essentially, to invent, and to invent a proper episode or figure of speech is to create one that in no way duplicates another in any existing poem. Thanks to the misinterpretation of a sentence in the *Poetics* (4.48b 5-9) Castelvetro holds Aristotle responsible for encouraging the practice that he can only describe as thievery. Aristotle holds that imitation is natural to men and that they acquire their first knowledge by imitating others. But the imitation natural to men Castelvetro sees as for the most part indiscriminating; "it consists ... in copying models supplied by others and doing exactly as they do without knowing why" (p.43). This is the kind of imitation that Castelvetro mistakenly takes Aristotle to be recommending to the poets, to the very makers, that is, who are obliged by the nature of their art to make poems "in every way distinguishable from any made before." But no poet can make such poems unless he proceeds as one who knows every moment exactly "why he does what he does," and that being so it follows that imitation as understood by Aristotle "is not truly and properly imitation." True imitation is, rather, a procedure that might be called a contest (*gareggiamento*), "a contest between the poet and the dispositions of fortune or the course of human events to determine which will invent the complex of human actions that in the hearing will be judged to be the more marvelous and the more abundant source of pleasure" (p.43).

The poet undertaking to make a poem pits himself against fortune and men, the makers of history. (Normally Castelvetro would have named divine Providence as the third of the makers of history, but he here refrains from doing so perhaps because no man can represent a divinely produced event as more marvelous than it is.) In that contest the prize will go to the poet, the maker of a fiction, if he succeeds in producing one that is more marvelous and will offer more pleasure than an actual event of the kind he has invented. Castelvetro has already said that it is his capacity for producing fictions no less delightful and probable than historical events that has won for the poet the name of maker, that is, "the name of a being more akin to gods than to men" (p.18). He never says, but he surely implies, that the reason a fiction may be pronounced more marvelous than a fact is that it is recognizably a thing of the same nature as the fact. One kind of imitation he has rejected, the imitation by one poet of another poet's inventions; but such inventions must be rejected because the only legitimate objects of a poet's imitation cannot be other than "the everyday happenings that are talked about among the people, the kind that resemble those reported in any one day's news and in histories" (p.20). And if a poem is an imitation of this kind, then a good poem will be one which at its most marvelous does not cease to reflect the world it undertook to

represent. The matter of a poem, in other words, corresponds to things in the world, which explains why the first theoretical question to which Castelvetro addresses himself is that of correspondence. "Truth [*verita*]", he asserts, "existed by nature before verisimilitude [*verisimilitudine*], and the thing represented [*la cosa rappresentata*] before the representation [*la cosa rappresentante*]", from which premise it follows that representations and probabilities depend upon and reflect the things represented and the truth (p.3). The representation could never have come into being if there had not first been something that would stand as its model. The poet, the maker of representations, is, to be sure, an inventor, but the fictions he invents are judged to have or to lack validity in the light of historical realities. The poet must invent his fictions with his eyes on the historically real; the imaginary actions must have the appearance of historical actions.

The reader of Castelvetro's commentary cannot fail to be impressed by the frequency with which Castelvetro expounds a principle of the art of poetry by referring, for comparison or contrast, to some principle of the art of history. The precedent for this procedure was set by Aristotle (9.51a 36-51b 11), who finds it illuminating, when defining the matter of poetry as "what may happen", to contrast it with the matter of history which he defines as "what has happened", and when considering the proper structure of an epic poem (23.59a 17-30) to contrast the unity of a poem, which consists of the unity of the action it imitates, with that of history, which consists of a variety of actions brought together by the fortuitous fact that they happened in a single period of time. Aristotle seems to be impressed by the contrasting features of poetry and history. One cannot imagine him endorsing Castelvetro's pronouncement that "poetry borrows all its light from history" (p.4) or that "if we already had an art of history we could have refrained from the labor of writing a complete art of poetry" (p.4). Castelvetro understands that poetry differs from history in that the matter of poetry is invented by the poet and the matter of history is not invented by the historian, and he even goes so far as to insist that "history cannot and should not with impunity be written in verse and poetry in prose any more than women can or should dress as men and men as women" (p.97), adding that Lucian should have written his dialogues and Boccaccio his *Decameron* in verse and Fracastoro his *Joseph* in prose. But by and large Castelvetro regards poetry and history as sister arts. The fact that between Aristotle's time and his own no one had written an art of history does not inhibit him from writing an art of poetry in the light of historiographical principles which he himself formulates. Castelvetro is not defeated, as he professes to be, by the absence of a necessary guide; he does not "wander in great darkness" (p.4); to read his art of poetry, to grow acquainted with what to his mind constitutes a good poem, is at the same time to grow acquainted with what to his mind constitutes a good history.

Poetry, then, being the image of history must, like history, be subjected to two tests of verisimilitude: the objects of its imitation must, as we have seen, be the real and not the fantastic, and its manner of representing them must not offend the audience's sense of the possible and the probable. Castelvetro's sense of these qualities does not differ from the historian's. In the *Aeneid*, for instance, Virgil opens the recital of Aeneas' wanderings with the words,

We build a fleet
Below Antandrus and the hills of Phrygian Ida.

That a fleet must be built is acceptable to the historian: the divine omens have directed Aeneas to sail westward and found a new nation; but no historian, and not Castelvetro, can believe that that fleet could have been built in the circumstances in which Aeneas and his company found themselves. Castelvetro the critic concedes that "this building of Aeneas' fleet is useful to the plot" and that "without it the *Aeneid* ... could not have come into being" (p.263). But he must nevertheless condemn Virgil's lines as representing an impossibility. "Antandrus," he argues, "is very near Troy, and Troy at that time was occupied by the victorious, powerful, and innumerable soldiery of the Greeks, who had innumerable ships at their disposal. In the circumstances, with the Greeks knowing, as they indeed must have known, what he was about, how could Aeneas have built twenty ships large enough to hold and fit to convey the great multitude of his followers? Again, if Troy had been captured, looted, and burned, and most of its men slain or taken prisoner together with its women and children, where did Aeneas find enough shipwrights to build the ships? And if he found the shipwrights, where could he have found the axes, the saws, the hatchets, and the other necessary tools? And if he lacked neither shipwrights nor tools, who (since it requires more than timber to build a ship) could have supplied him with the necessary nails, pitch, oakum, and other materials? And where could he have found the ropes and sails and anchors and other equipment" (p.263)? And if Virgil's lines are condemned as representing an impossibility, an episode in the *Iliad*, Helen's naming for Priam the Greek leaders in the Trojan plain in the tenth year of the war is, by the application of the historian's standard of the probable, condemned as improbable. "Homer ... is guilty of an offense against verisimilitude when he represents Priam on a tower requesting Helen to name for him a number of the Greek captains in the plain below; for it is reasonable to suppose that he must by that late day have known the names of the very men who had more than once visited Troy for a variety of reasons and had often conducted negotiations with him whether to ransom prisoners, to arrange a truce for burying the dead, to propose conditions for an accord and an end to the war, or to secure other ends of the same kind, and that

he himself had by then visited the Greek camp for similar reasons or at least had long before then on that same tower or another have requested Helen or some other person to point out and name the chiefs of the enemy forces" (p.268).

A poem, the representation of things that may happen, must so represent them that they have the appearance of things that have actually happened, "with never a sign that they are the productions of the poet's imagination" (p.99); it is to the poet's great credit if he succeeds in employing "every means at his command to give fiction the appearance of fact" (p.99). The lines which Castelvetro quotes from Virgil and those which he refers to in the *Iliad* both fail to meet one essential requirement of poetry: both passages are the creations of poets who neglected to look to the historian as their model. No historian would have told of the building of a fleet by Aeneas and his followers at Antandrus; the building of a fleet in the circumstances in which Aeneas at that time found himself was an impossibility, and impossibilities, which make incredible histories, make also incredible poems. And no historian would have told that Priam bade Helen name for him the Greek captains in the tenth year of the Trojan war; that action has the appearance of an incredible possibility, a possibility that is unacceptable to the historian and should be to the poet. Poets, to be sure, are not historians; but no poet is truly a poet if he has not mastered the art of making the imaginary acceptable as possible and probable. Again, the poet, who sometimes legitimately introduces a known historical fact into his poem, is no more than the historian at liberty to subject it to the slightest alteration. Dante represents Virgil as saying (*Inf.* 1.70) that he was born *sub Julio*, when in fact he was born before Caesar's consulate and before Caesar suppressed the liberties of the Roman Republic; Virgil represents Aeneas and Dido as contemporaries when, in fact, the fall of Troy occurred long before the founding of Carthage (see VI.2.8 and 9). Both poets must be accounted guilty, as two historians would have been, of falsifying history, Dante less than Virgil, for he represents what he erroneously believed to be historical fact, whereas Virgil knew that the tale he told was a lie (p.280). And for the reasons already given it is no more lawful for the epic poet than it is for the historian to lapse from absolute impartiality as he develops his fictitious history. An epic poet who fills a certain number of lines neither narrating an action nor representing a character speaking, but expressing his own judgments on some person or thing, "dealing out praise or blame, drawing from them lessons for the benefit of the commonwealth and making of them instruments for the teaching of personal and civic virtue" (p.249) is in those lines not a poet, first by reason of his mode, for he is not there representing a character speaking in his own person, and secondly by reason of his matter, for his utterance forms no logical part of the plot, "springing, as it does, from the feelings aroused

in him by the action" (p.249). Nor should the epic poet believe that he may legitimately depart from a strictly chronological order in the disposition of his episodes. For guidance in this or in other matters he should go to the historian and not adopt the teachings of critics who hold with Horace that the poet should tell his story in the "artificial" order which they see in the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, each of which begins, as they believe, in the middle of its story and introduces the account of its beginning by having it related by Ulysses in the court of Alcinous and by Aeneas at that of Dido. Castelvetro devotes many pages (p.75) to proving that the rule cannot be defended in theory nor by the practice of Homer, whom he shows to have followed a perfectly natural order in the *Odyssey*, and of Virgil, who does not deviate from that order in the *Aeneid*. Here as elsewhere Castelvetro remains firm in his insistence on an almost complete correspondence between poetry and historiography. *Est enim finitimus historico poeta*.²⁰

The poet at work, Castelvetro has said, should strive to excel the dispositions of fortune and the course of human events by making his imitations of them more delightful than they and also more marvelous. The implication here is plainly that the marvelous is not the peculiar property of poetic inventions but is to be observed in the life of the world that is the general object of the poet's imitations; and since historians are bound by the nature of their art to offer a true account of what has happened, descriptions of the marvelous will not be absent from their histories. That being so, the poet cannot choose to slight the marvelous; its presence must be felt in every one of his poems. A poem which fails to astound will fail to do what poetry was invented to do, which is to give pleasure. "The end of poetry," Castelvetro says, "is pleasure; and since the marvelous is especially capable of giving pleasure, it follows that the tragic poet must do his utmost to achieve the marvelous, and the epic poet, because of his greater opportunities, to achieve it in a much higher degree" (p.254). This injunction Castelvetro lays upon the poet not only on his own authority but also on Aristotle's, whose definition of tragedy implies, in Castelvetro's reading of it, that "the plot must be marvelous, for Aristotle's definition of it says that 'through pity and fear [tragedy] effects the purgation of such emotions,' and a plot cannot arouse pity and fear unless it astounds us" (p.72). Castelvetro never undertakes to define the marvelous. He categorically denies that it can be identified with the miraculous, reasoning that since all things are possible to God, divine interventions are miraculous but not marvelous (p.139). The miraculous escape of Medea in the chariot drawn by winged dragons is not a marvelous episode in Euripides' tragedy because the chariot had been sent down by the sun. But if he omits to give a precise definition of the term, the numerous actions that he describes as marvelous are without exception probabilities of such rare occurrence that they lend credence

to Agathon's dictum, twice quoted by Aristotle in the *Poetics* and accepted by Castelvetro, that it is probable that improbabilities will occasionally occur. When Orestes in *Iphigenia in Tauris* is saved from impending death by the unforeseen mutual recognition of brother and sister, "we feel the pleasure properly afforded by the marvelous, which is the pleasure arising from our seeing something happen which we had thought impossible" (p.254). But though incidents are the more marvelous the more they approximate the impossible (as when the statue of Mityls crushed to death the man at whose hands Mityls had met his death) they will lose their power to give pleasure if they cross the line that separates the improbable from the impossible, the credible from the incredible. Aristotle (25.60a 24-25) is prepared to tolerate an impossibility if it will make some part of a poem more marvelous. Castelvetro knows no such tolerance. To him the impossible is simply the incredible, and the incredible is never marvelous: "If I consider it incredible that Daedalus is capable of flight, I cannot marvel at any representation that shows him flying" (p.290). The invention of an incredible episode that proves to be of benefit to the plot he can condemn not on critical but on moral grounds. "An evil," he moralizes, "must never be embraced as a means to the good." Among those who can be found guilty of this lapse from moral rectitude is no less a poet than Homer, who in the *Odyssey* represents the sleeping Ulysses incredibly abandoned on the shores of Ithaca by the sailors who had conveyed him there. This and other like violations of verisimilitude Castelvetro reprobates in the language of the Gospels as the aberrations of men who "entered the sheepfold not by the gate, the way of the shepherd and the watchdog, but by the way of the thief and the wolf; that is to say, they did not come to the more marvelous and the more moving by the gate of verisimilitude, the way of the poet and the true imitator, but by the gate of incredibility, the way of the fool and the ignorant mass of men" (p.289).²¹

A poet who has succeeded in producing a truly marvelous action could have done so only by the strenuous exercise of a genius schooled in all the doctrines that constitute a perfect art of poetry. The poem that produces its effect from the stage or the platform is the result of expertly directed labor. "Labor" (*fatica*) is a prominent idea throughout Castelvetro's commentary, almost as prominent as the idea of pleasure. It is to the poet's *fatica*, the indefatigable application of all his knowledge and skills, that the audience owes the appropriate pleasure it receives from each of the species of poetry. A poem's worth can in part be judged by the amount of labor that must have gone into its making; the competent critic possesses the capability of discerning the number and the magnitude of the difficulties that the poet overcame in making his poem. The poet who gives the world a versified version of a particular history known in great detail is morally culpable of having shirked the labor of invention. The true

poet possesses not only the art but the moral energy to poetize acceptably. Castelvetro agrees with Aristotle that the plot is the most important of the six qualitative parts of tragedy, but as we shall soon see he considers Aristotle's reasons for according it that distinction less than sufficient because he fails to recognize that "it must have required more labor to produce than any of the other parts" (p.66). Language Castelvetro would rank higher than spectacle "because it is more difficult to suit language to the plot and to the agents' thoughts than to design suitable costumes for the actors and suitable properties for the stage" (p.70). A particularized epic narrative is more difficult to produce than a generalized one and is therefore to be deemed the more excellent. "Homer, who was conscious of his true worth, wrote mostly particularized narrative to give proof of his superhuman genius. Virgil, on the contrary, did all in his power to avoid particularized narrative, taking cover behind the generalized, which requires less labor and has the appearance of something great and magnificent" (p.33). In these sentences Homer is the poet who not only confidently confronts and overcomes all difficulties as they appear, but deliberately chooses the more difficult of two poetic styles so as to give proof of his prowess. Castelvetro portrays him as a poetic virtuoso performing technical wonders to win the world's applause. It was not Homer but Castelvetro's Homer who in designing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* chose to restrict himself in each to one action and one hero, thereby serving the poems by making them more marvelous and himself by winning the world's admiration as a poet who could overcome any and all difficulties (p.90). The world admires the marvelous in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but it admires no less the marvelous poet who "with a minor episode in Achilles' life, an outburst of wrath, ... succeeded in fashioning a plot as considerable as that of the *Iliad*, and with a single episode in Ulysses' life, his return to Ithaca from Calypso's island, in fashioning a second plot no less marvelous than the first" (p.143). In the last pages of the commentary Castelvetro expresses agreement with Aristotle's judgment that tragedy ranks higher as a species of poetry than the epic, and he does not attempt to refute any of the reasons on which that judgment is based. But in the end Castelvetro ranks tragedy higher than epic poetry for a reason that is not Aristotle's, and it is that "the peculiar constituents of epic poetry may be invented with less exertion of the poet's genius than those of tragedy" (p.321).

Tragedy is composed of six qualitative parts, of which plot, Aristotle holds, is the most important, so much so, in fact, that he calls it (6.50a 38-39) the first principle ($\alpha\rho\chi\eta$) and the soul of tragedy. In his version of Aristotle's text (R.1.182) Castelvetro mistranslates $\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ as "the beginning" and thereby creates for himself the problem of reconciling the idea of the plot as the beginning of tragedy with the idea of it, which Aristotle ad-

vanced somewhat earlier (6.50a 22-23), as its end (τέλος). That problem he solves by asserting that the plot is indeed both the beginning and the end of tragedy, its beginning because "the poet composes the plot before he turns his hand to the other parts" and its end because its other parts "are fashioned thus and so to suit the plot and are always regardful of the plot as their end" (p.68). The idea of plot as the end of tragedy accords perfectly with the idea of it as its soul. "The soul," he says, "is superior to the body." The parts of tragedy other than the plot are, so to speak, the body of the tragedy and "follow and obey the plot as members of the body follow and obey the soul" (p.68). In this view character as one of the members of the body of tragedy truly performs its proper function when, like each of the other members, it submits to the demands of the plot. Aristotle and Castelvetro are agreed that the plot, whether in tragedies, comedies, or epic poems, must be so constructed that it will recognizably be the part to which character is ancillary. Castelvetro gives short shrift to "the many ancient and modern men of letters of great renown, and Julius Caesar Scaliger among them," who have commonly believed that Homer and Virgil designed their epic poems "to set before the world the best possible portrait of, say, a wrathful hero, a daring adventurer, or a wise man" (p.67). They were for the most part men who, like Scaliger, held it as an almost self-evident truth that the end of poetry was to teach as well as to please and, as a corollary to that truth, that poets teach by applying the best resources of their genius to the portrayal of persons whom the world will find it morally improving to emulate or to spurn.²³ The theorizings of these critics Castelvetro contemptuously dismisses as mere gabble (*ciancie*). The intention of all good narrative poets, and not of Homer and Virgil alone, was ever "to compose an excellent plot" and "it was only for the sake of the plot, to make it more excellent, i.e., to make it duly marvelous and probable, that they introduced the characters, each with suitable moral traits" (p.67). After expounding the five reasons why Aristotle places plot first among the qualitative parts of narrative and dramatic poetry Castelvetro characteristically adds that "anyone bent on denying that the plot is more important than the other parts of tragedy could perhaps refute Aristotle's arguments without great difficulty" (p.66). What follows is a reconsideration of the rank to be accorded to each of the parts, with the result that though thought is elevated to second place and character lowered to third, plot is not removed from first place. The second effort is followed by a third in which second place is given to language and third to thought, while character is sunk below both. But here again plot is not removed from first place; it is in fact more securely ensconced there than before the previous reshuffling, for in the course of his re-examination of the nature of each part Castelvetro finds occasion for upholding the pri-

macy of the plot with an argument not advanced before, which is that it is the part which confronts the poet with greater difficulties than any other and the one the handling of which he finds the most toilsome. When all is said, character, thought, and language find their fulfilment in the plot, and it is the plot as it is fulfilled by them that enables the poem to produce its proper effect: "the pity and fear demanded of the poet are those that can proceed only from the plot and not such as can proceed from other arts [music, singing, dancing] or from the spectacle" (p.148).²⁴

Of all makers of plots the comic poet enjoys the greatest freedom, for of the three species of poetry considered in the *Poetics* comedy comes closest to being pure fiction. Aristotle holds (2.48a 1-6) that since "all men differ from one another as being morally good or bad," it follows that the persons imitated by the poets, like those imitated by the painters, "must of necessity be better than we are or worse or like us." But he adds soon after (2.48a 16-18) that tragedy is distinguishable from comedy by the moral differences between the persons it imitates, "since comedy would imitate persons who are worse and tragedy persons who are better than men of the present age." This pronouncement Castelvetro rejects outright as a serious misapprehension of the proper object of poetic imitation; to accept it, in his view, would be tantamount to accepting the error that poetry is "first and foremost an imitation of character, of virtues and vices" (p.23) and not, as Aristotle well knows, of human actions. The truth of the matter Castelvetro finds not in Aristotle but in the doctrine commonly held in his own time and earlier, that the species of poetry are determined not by the moral dispositions of its characters, but by whether, in Castelvetro's own words, "the persons imitated are royal personages, burghers, or peasants" (I.12 and n.1). The persons imitated by comedy are not all persons of low character²⁵; they are all, however, and the nature of comedy requires them to be, persons of low condition, persons who live and die in obscurity, who are not known for any accomplishments above the ordinary, and who when they die leave behind them neither histories nor legends. As a class, however, they are not unknown to poetry. They constitute, in fact, the very class that furnish the comic poet with the human types from which he selects the *dramatis personae* of his comedies, and since these *personae* are not real but creations of the imagination, he enjoys the freedom of inventing not only their actions but their names. But his freedom is not absolute. The plot he invents must be set in the world recognizable as their world by all men; he is not "at liberty to invent new cities or rivers or mountains or kingdoms or customs or laws, or to alter the usual course of nature and represent a snowfall in midsummer or a harvest in midwinter" (p.96). What is more, the action he invents must, like those of tragedy and epic poetry, be a possible human action that has never happened. In this statement the operative word is *possible*;

no less than tragic and epic plots the comic poet's must be credible as truly reflecting the private lives of the humble. Comedy may not lawfully trespass the bounds of verisimilitude; the use in some Roman comedies of a human *prologus* to reveal the action about to be enacted is to be condemned as a violation of verisimilitude, for no human being can be presumed to possess the gift of discoursing upon an action that has not yet happened (p.210). Finally, comedy can have no other ending than a happy one, an ending that brings happiness to all its characters or only to the good among them and unhappiness to the bad. The second of these endings can sometimes be found in tragedy and epic poetry, but is by nature proper to comedy. The first is possible only in comic actions, where the characters are persons "of no great moral strength and elevation" who can easily compose their differences because their "quarrels are over trivialities" (p.147).

Having described the typical comic character as a person morally worse than the average, Aristotle returns to the subject on a later page (5.49a 33-37), repeating that the persons imitated by comedy are worse than the generality of men, but adding, in Castelvetro's paraphrase of his words (p.213) that " 'worse' is not intended to mean worse in every respect but only in the sense that they have certain imperfections which are by nature ludicrous, such as stupidity and physical ugliness of a kind that gives no pain." This second description Castelvetro finds acceptable; he interprets it, in fact, not as a new statement contradicting or even correcting the earlier one but completing it, rather, and at the same time clarifying Aristotle's brief remarks on the *Margites* (4.48b 34-49a 2), in which he had described that comic work as an image of the ludicrous. Taking all that Aristotle had so far said on the subject as mere jottings that he would later elaborate in a longer and more systematic work on poetry (see IV. n.1) Castelvetro proceeds to do what he assumes Aristotle must have done and writes a long discourse on the ludicrous in which he divides the subject into four kinds, illustrating each with many examples drawn almost exclusively from the *Decameron*.

An audience viewing the performance of a tragedy or a comedy apprehends the action not only through the words spoken by the actors and the chorus but through their costumes and accoutrements, their motions and gestures, the performances of the musicians, singers, and dancers, and the stage scenery. An audience hearing the recital of an epic poem, on the other hand, apprehends only as much of the action as is conveyed to it by the words recited by the rhapsodist. Tragic and comic poets are given a great advantage over epic poets by the mode of their imitations, which enables them to represent words with words and things with things, with the result that their dramas can be both seen and heard, whereas poems in the narrative mode can only be heard. Castelvetro in fact considers the

imitative capacities of the narrative mode so meager that he can in characteristically hyperbolic fashion bring himself to say that "its kind of imitation cannot properly be called imitation" (p.308). But though epic representations are necessarily less vivid than the dramatic, epic poems enjoy the very great advantage over the dramatic of not being restricted to a single place or a single period of time. Language, the sole medium of epic poetry, "has the power to set all kinds of things, however remote in time and place, before our intellect," with the result that an epic can "without violence to its nature recount an action that happened in different places and over many years" (p.243). But a species of poetry that permits the poet to range widely in time and space is not without its pitfalls; epic poets must be constantly on their guard against producing poems of an unacceptable length and composed of an unacceptably large number of unrelated episodes. Aristotle, who begins a sentence (23.59a 17-30) by counseling epic poets to model their plots on those of tragedy, each of which grows out of a single action that is a complete whole, with a beginning, middle, and end, concludes it with the warning against modeling them on history, which must of necessity combine in one narrative the numerous events, related and unrelated, that occur to one or more than one person in a given period of time. This is plainly what Aristotle says, and it is what he is understood as saying by both Robortello and Vettori (5.1a.3). But Castelvetro understands Aristotle's warning to apply not to history in general but to histories "as commonly written" (*historie usitate*), reading in the phrase the implication that the history written by those who understand the true nature of their art limits itself to the representation of a single action and therefore can no less than tragedy serve as a model for the epic. To give the reader what he understood to be the precise meaning of Aristotle's sentence Castelvetro takes pains to offer a paraphrase of it: "It has become customary for historians to relate a number of different actions and to set them before their readers as the single history of a single action. Though epic poetry is and ought to be similar to history, yet it must not follow the example of history in this respect, for history so written is not to be approved, ... its only justification being that it has been the only kind witlessly produced by most historians" (p.223). Aristotle, Robortello, and Vettori, then, understand that history, which represents what has happened, has developed its own method of representing its peculiar matter and that it is a method which poetry, which represents what may happen, had best avoid if it would succeed in representing its own matter effectively. Castelvetro's misinterpretation of Aristotle identifies the two methods and enables him to hold fast, with, as he believes, Aristotle's support, to one of the most cherished of his doctrines, that poetry is "an image or an imitation of history" (p.18). The epic poem will achieve unity and wholeness and coherence by imaging history not as it

is written but as it should be written.

But an epic plot, though not limited, as a tragic plot is, to one place and a short period of time, must be developed with due regard for the limitations of the human mind; a plot of great length may be too long to be taken in by the mind in one view and would as a result fall short of its proper effect (p.239). The epic poet, then, should, like the tragic poet, subject his poem to two kinds of measurements, one sensible and external, the other intellectual and internal (p.240). The external prescribes the epic's proper time span, which, since epics can be recited in parts over a number of days, should not be so short that it can be recited in less than a considerable portion of a day, as Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* probably is; it should be long enough to be recited over an indeterminate number of days and may extend to "more than a month" (p.242). The internal measurement will prescribe a length no greater than that of tragedy, for both species of poetry represent "a transition from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness" (p.242). Within these limits epic poetry is free to range widely in time and space, though the wise poet, ever mindful of the necessity of marvelous effects, will not fail to exercise his freedom within limits, for "we marvel more at an action in which a very great reversal from one condition to its contrary occurs in one small place or in a short period of time than at one in which those restrictions are not observed" (p.241). Again, an epic poem may, like a tragedy, tell the story of one person or more than one. "On the other hand," Castelvetro observes, "the most laudable action is the one that restricts itself to one person, and therefore greater praise is due to the arrival of the unaccompanied Ulysses in Corfu or in Ithaca than to that of Aeneas accompanied by many friends in Africa or in Italy" (p.242). Homer, in fact, gives evidence of his superiority not only to Virgil but to every other epic poet not only in these episodes but in his handling of every other part of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.²⁶

In one of the earlier pages of the commentary (I.9) Castelvetro enunciates the doctrine that the poet may never draw upon history for the matter of his poem. In a later page, however, he admonishes the reader that his words must be interpreted "with sobriety and moderation" (p.20). For it is a fact that some poets dramatize events involving "kings and divine beings," and, when they do, "poetry and history are, to a certain point, identical;" in such tragedies or epic poems "poetry is history" and not, as he had said earlier, only "the image or imitation of history" (p.20). The statement may well strike the reader as a recantation; actually it is not intended to contradict the earlier statement but only to prepare the reader for the reception of ideas that will later be advanced about the true nature of tragedy and epic poetry. The first of them is that "the actions proper to tragedy and epic poetry cannot be simply human actions; they must be the magnificent actions of royal personages" (p.95). On the other hand,

the historical event which the poet may legitimately dramatize must be one that is not known in detail, but only in summary or universalized form (p.95). One such event is the history of Orestes, "who accompanied by Pylades and with his and Electra's help slew his mother" (p.95). The famous matricide is known to have happened, but all precise knowledge of how it was committed has been lost. The poet who would make a tragedy out of the few known facts has no choice but to invent particularized and convincing episodes which tell how the slaying might have been compassed. It is by the invention of these particulars, "which must be both novel and marvelous," (p.103) that he proves himself a poet, and no less a poet than one who, like the comic poets, enjoys the liberty of inventing both his actions and his characters. In point of fact, he proves himself the greater poet, for it is a far more difficult poetic feat to invent only such particulars as can be made to harmonize with the few known historical facts than to invent every detail of an action of which history has no record.²⁷ What is more, a poet developing a tragedy from what has been delivered to him by history or tradition labors under the same obligation as the historian, who is forbidden by the nature of his art to falsify what is known to be true.

Tragedy being a species of poetry, its end must be to give pleasure, but only the pleasure that a tragic action can give, which is "the purgation and expulsion of pity and fear from human souls by the action ... of these same emotions" (p.150).²⁸ The process is initiated by a reversal of fortune from happiness to misery of one or more persons of noble rank who are neither eminently virtuous nor eminently wicked and whose fall is due to some error and not to wrongdoing (p.175). The audience's experience of pity and fear is at the same time, as Aristotle believes, the experience of the pleasure which tragedy is uniquely designed to provide. This doctrine is to Castelvetro clear proof of the meagerness of Aristotle's understanding of the nature of tragic pleasure (p.164). An emotion that results from the action of pity and fear cannot, he affirms, properly be called a pleasure; "it is rightly to be designated, rather, as a moral benefit [*utilita*], for it is health of soul produced by very bitter medicine." There is a direct and an indirect poetic pleasure. The pleasure afforded by epic poetry is direct (p.147). But that produced by tragedy is indirect. "The immediate effect of witnessing the fall of a virtuous man is one of sadness; but this sadness ... being caused, as it is, by injustice, brings us to a recognition of our goodness, and it is this recognition of our goodness that, thanks to the love we naturally bear ourselves, becomes the cause of very great pleasure" (p.150).

The reversal just considered is the one that Aristotle (13.53a 7-12) holds to be the most suitable for tragedy and the most commendable as representing the fall of a "person of ordinary virtue ... from happiness to misery" (p.162). But Aristotle pronounced it the most suitable one only after he

had considered and rejected several others (13.52b 34-53a 7). One of them was the fall from happiness to misery of a man of pre-eminent virtue; another the rise from misery to happiness of a villainous one. The first he rejected for being neither piteous nor fear-inspiring but "abominable;"²⁹ the second for being "the most remote from tragedy." Castelvetro, on the other hand, holds that tragedy can be well served by both reversals. Before he undertakes to argue his case, however, he finds it necessary to draw a distinction between Aristotle's own conception of God as a being so exalted that he disdains to take notice of individual beings of every kind and an *ad hoc* one which can be found in the *Poetics*, a treatise designed to teach poets how to compose a tragedy that will, as a tragedy should, produce its proper effect on the souls of the common people. Considering him, then, as the author of the *Poetics*, Castelvetro attributes to him the *ad hoc* belief "that God watches with special care over individual persons and particularly over those of pre-eminent virtue" (p.162). It is, as Castelvetro believes, this assumption that accounts for the injunction which he lays upon the tragic poets against representing men of very holy life (*di santissima vita*) as falling from happiness to misery, "for that reversal would be neither piteous nor fear-inspiring but abominable," which is to say that it would be felt as abominable by the common people and would consequently engender in them to the belief "that God did not exercise a special providence over his true servants, that He was an unjust God, withholding their just reward from those who render Him due honor ..." (p.162). Castelvetro rejects Aristotle's reasoning as that of a mind ignorant of the fact that men are terrified more "by the sufferings of one better than themselves than by those of one of their own kind" (p.162), for seeing that men of great virtue are not spared a fall from their prosperous state, the souls of the less virtuous will be troubled by the fear that they themselves will one day be surely visited by the same misfortune. As for Aristotle's contention that the sufferings of the virtuous are not a cause for pity, Castelvetro disposes of it with two rhetorical questions: "And who shall be pitied if not the saintly man who falls into misfortune? For if we are moved to pity by those who suffer unjustly, who deserves misfortune less than the man of most saintly life?" (p.162) Aristotle's belief that both the fall of the good man and the rise of the bad will incite the common people to indignation against God has been taken up by others. Castelvetro's answer to all of them is "that the common people, who believe that God rules the world and watches over all individual things, exercising a special care over each, believe also that He is just in all His actions and makes all things redound to His own glory and the good of His faithful servants" (p.163). Their faith will therefore not be shaken by the rise of a wicked man from misery to happiness. Aristotle believes that it will; "in his opinion," Castelvetro says, "both changes of fortune are equally abominable" (p.163).

Castelvetro finds the second reversal no more abominable than the first, for the common people (pagans, presumably, no less than Christians) believe that "all things happen by the just disposition of God, being each and all under His special providence" (p.164). They will therefore readily believe that God has exalted an unworthy man for reasons beyond the powers of mortal man to fathom; they will in fact believe anything of God except this, "that He has shown favor to a wicked man for some evil end and that He is or can be the author of evil" (p.164). The conclusion of this curious argument, in which Castelvetro seems to attribute the same monotheistic, and indeed Christian, beliefs to both Aristotle's humbler contemporaries and his own, is that "if we consider the persons who should or may be considered ... the rise of a bad man is no less capable of moving to pity and fear than the fall of a just man" (p.164). The persons considered are the populace, whose religious beliefs enable them to be moved to the proper tragic emotions by two changes of fortune that might be rejected as abominable by their social and intellectual superiors. In the end it is their response to them that certifies both as authentically tragic.

Speaking of the difference in length between the epic poem and tragedy Aristotle says (5.49b 12-14) that "tragedy endeavors to stay as much as possible under one revolution of the sun,³⁰ or to vary from it only a little." In the commentary Castelvetro expands Aristotle's statement and says that the length of tragedies is limited to "the period [of time] within which the audience may sit in the theatre without discomfort, and this period, as Aristotle tell us and I myself believe, cannot be longer than one revolution of the sun, or twelve hours" (p.243). Aristotle's statement is intended as no more than a generalization on the customary length of the tragedies of his and earlier times; Castelvetro not only reduces Aristotle's "under one revolution of the sun" to twelve hours, which he frequently interprets as the time taken by the sun to run its course above our hemisphere, but establishes the twelve hours as the limit which no tragedy or comedy may ever legitimately exceed. The apparently arbitrary distortion of Aristotle's thought is to be accounted for by Castelvetro's conception of dramatic imitation and of the dramatic audience. A tragedy or comedy "represents words directly with words and things with things," and, that being so, "it must of necessity (*di necessita*) fill as many hours on the stage as the imaginary action it represents would have filled or would fill in the world if it had actually occurred or were to occur there" (p.82). In analogical terms a tragedy is to the possible event it imitates as "a portrait is to its original when the latter's dimensions are preserved" (p.82). And even if a tragic poet should succeed, against what Castelvetro conceived to be the nature of things, in compressing an imaginary action of some days into a few hours, the audience could never "be deceived into believing that the action extends over a number of days and nights when they can tell by the

testimony of their senses that they have been sitting in the theatre for only a few hours" (p.243). In the circumstances it remains for the tragic (or comic) poet to imitate only actions that can be seen and heard in their entirety in a reasonable number of hours, not so few "that the public [would] resent having been lured to the theatre with great inconvenience to itself for one hour or even two" (p.85) nor so many that it would be subject to severe discomfort, "for people cannot go without food, drink, and sleep, and without relieving their bowels and their bladders and attending to other bodily needs for longer than twelve hours" (p.243). Tragic poets could, to be sure, emulate poets and construct their tragedies in such a way that one part of them after another could be performed at intervals over a period of time. But to do so would be to ignore the fact that "with the end of the first day and the coming of night the characters continue to speak and act and that what they say and do would not be seen and heard by the audience, who by then will have returned to their homes" (p.245). Castelvetro names Plautus and Terence as having written comedies "in which the action fills more than a single day" (p.244) and again Euripides, together with Plautus "and others," for committing the same offense (p.317). The offending plays are not named, but two of them are Plautus' *The Captives*, in which Philocrates travels to Elis from Anatolia and returns with Philopolemus before the end of the comedy, and Euripides' *Suppliants*, in which Theseus leaves Athens with an army to fight a battle in Thebes before a short hemichorus and a messenger enters at the end of it to announce his victory. Julius Caesar Scaliger takes note of these facts and condemns both as offenses against verisimilitude. The third seems to be Terence's *Self-Tormentor*, which begins on one day and ends on the next, an irregularity that Scaliger finds excusable because the comedy was performed at the Ludi Megalenses, which lasted for seven days (see III.5b.2, V.2a.4, and VII.3c.1).

The twelve-hour limit — the "unity of time" — has been arrived at through deliberations that took into account Aristotle's authority and what Castelvetro conceived to be the peculiar nature of dramatic imitation and the physiological and psychological constitution of its audience. No authoritative statement by Aristotle and no deliberation of any sort precedes the enunciation of the "unity of place;" it is simply handed down as an injunction and not as a reasoned conclusion. Perhaps Castelvetro assumed as self-evident that if an audience believes that the time which a dramatic representation fills on the stage is neither longer nor shorter than that which it would fill if it were happening in the world, it can also believe that a stage which is represented as a particular place in the first scene cannot be accepted as a different place in a later one. And so it becomes mandatory upon the dramatist to restrict the space in which the action occurs "not only to a single city, village, field, etc., but to as much of

them as can be seen by the eyes of a single person" (p.242); more precisely, that the action "must be set in a place no larger than the stage on which the actors perform" (p.243).

As for the plot, it too has its unity. Aristotle says (8.51a 30–31) that it must imitate not more than a single action, though Castelvetro takes him to say "the single action of a single person" (see III.5c.1). Having mistaken Aristotle's meaning Castelvetro rejects it by stating it as a matter of fact that every well-constructed tragedy and comedy contains not one action but two and that the two actions are sometimes so loosely related that it would seem possible to stage them separately. Of Euripides' *Hercules Furens* he says that "no one is so blind as not to see that [it] contains two actions" (p.88). The same could be said for a comedy, Terence's *Andria*. But having as much as said that all tragedies and all comedies are constructed like the *Hercules Furens* and the *Andria*, he retreats to a position from which he can proceed to "the whole truth" of the matter in hand. It is the position from which he can see poetry as "the imitation of history" and as constantly following in its footsteps (p.89). Once that is known, we can see that the truth about poetic unity is to be found by considering the practice of the historians. What has that practice been? Plutarch and others have brought into one history "a number of actions of a single person;" Sallust, "who wrote the history of Rome's war against Jugurtha," can be said to have written "the single action of a whole people;" Livy and others have written histories containing "a number of actions of a whole people;" and Trogus Pompeius and many others have written "many actions of many persons or of many peoples" (p.89). What the historians have done the dramatic poets should, considering the nature of their art, be bound to do.³¹ But certain practical considerations will not permit them to follow that course. "A tragic or comic plot should contain a single action or two so interrelated that they may be accounted one, and of one person rather than of a whole people, not because it cannot by nature hold more, but because limitations of time [twelve hours] and place under which tragedies and comedies are performed will not permit the representation of many actions or of a single action of a whole people, and quite frequently not even the whole of a single action if it is somewhat long. This, not Aristotle's, is the principal and most compelling reason why tragic and comic plots should contain only a single action of a single person or two actions that may be accounted one because of their interdependence" (p.89). The proper tragic or comic plot, then, observes the unities of plot, of time, and of place.

In 1572, two years after the publication of Castelvetro's commentary, Jean de la Taille wrote in his *Art de la Tragédie*, which served as the preface to his *Saül Furieux*, that "narratives and plays must be represented as occurring on the same day, at the same time, and in the same place."³² The

statement is more and less than Castelvetrican: more in that it prescribes the unities of time and place for narrative as well as for dramatic poetry and contains the non-Castelvetrican phrase "at the same time;" less in that it does not mention the unity of action (which, incidentally, is adumbrated on a later page).³³ Frederick West, editor of Jean de la Taille's preface, asks if its source could have been Castelvetro's *Poetica d'Aristotele*, which had appeared in Vienna in 1570. "That," he says, "is a possibility that cannot be ignored, for we know that Jean de la Taille rejects Horace's utilitarian doctrine, which Castelvetro had been the first to call in question."³⁴ But though the connection between Jean de la Taille and Castelvetro must remain, as it does for West, a possibility and not a certainty, the fact remains that the unities, more exactly the unities of time and place, were first given their formulation, though not their name, in Castelvetro's book, and it was through Castelvetro's promulgation of them that they became the most famous single dramaturgical doctrine of the modern age under the name of "the Aristotelian unities." That misnomer and the example of the Greek tragedians (in Milton's phrase, "ancient rule and best example") account for the great authority that the doctrine enjoyed for at least two centuries. For what ceased to be a doctrine and became a rule was generally believed to have been prescribed by Aristotle, and in those two centuries to be an Aristotelian in poetry was to be first and foremost an upholder of the "unities." When they were finally discredited by the critics of the Romantic age, the achievement was acclaimed as a release from the tyranny of a false doctrine and indeed proved to be the convulsion that brought about the dethronement of Aristotle as the supreme lawgiver in the realm of dramatic poetry.

The tyranny which the doctrine of the three unities exercised on the European dramaturgy of two centuries invites an inquiry into the considerations that could have induced Castelvetro to conceive of the dramatic poem as a single action every part of which must be represented as occurring in a single place and lasting no longer than twelve hours. Bernard Weinberg attributes Castelvetro's formulation of the doctrine to the limitations of the gross minds and lethargic imaginations of the peculiar audience for whom all poetry, as Castelvetro believed, was invented. If the audience was to know the pleasure which dramatic poetry is capable of giving, then no drama could be said to have been properly designed that had not taken those limitations into account. "The audience's demand for comfort," Weinberg says, "introducee the requirement of a 'unity' of time...." The time limit imposed by Castelvetro is twelve hours; that limit is necessary because at the end of twelve hours in the theatre the people must return to their homes to attend to their physical needs. But would Castelvetro have prescribed a period longer or shorter than twelve hours if the audience had been composed of a social and intellectual élite? "Its lack of imagina-

tion," Weinberg continues, adds the 'unity' of place."³⁵ Actually, Castelvetro formulates no rationale for the 'unity' of place; he simply imposes it on the dramatist, never explaining that the unity is designed to meet the psychological needs of a popular, and therefore unimaginative, audience.

Castelvetro generally speaks as one who understands that the rude and ignorant multitude cannot be effectively reached by a poetry that is not designed to suit their limited intellectual capacities. The required poetry was, to his mind, neither more nor less than fictitious history, a kind of fiction that faithfully represents, with metrical language as its medium, persons and actions and scenes observable in daily life. The unities, which lend to fiction the appearance of history, can therefore be said to have been invented to serve the Castelvetroan audience, which has been represented as incapable, in Coleridge's words, of "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." But the lack of poetic faith is possibly more characteristic of Castelvetro than of his audience. The first poetic theory formulated by him is that poetry is an imitation of history. His word for imitation is *rassomiglianza*: resemblance. By 1570 the accepted Italian translation of Aristotle's *mimesis* was *imitatione*. Castelvetro's departure from contemporary usage may well signify that to his mind *imitatione* failed to denote with sufficient exactness the required fidelity of the well-made representation to the thing represented. The poet for whom he reserves the highest praise is the one who "employs every means at his command to give fiction the appearance of fact" (p.99). Coming from Castelvetro's pen these words can be interpreted to mean that the poet must employ every means at his command to create a verbal *trompe l'oeil*. (He has also said [p.99] that epics and dramas should show no sign of having been produced by a poet's imagination.) He rejects as unable to give "the pleasure peculiar to imitations" the fantastic episodes in Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* and "certain books in the Spanish tongue" (p.48). The fantastic he would have excluded from poetry because it is "commonly judged by the people to be impossible or improbable" (p.48). But an uneducated class scornful of the fantastic is Castelvetro's invention; the fantastic is normally a source of genuine pleasure both to the uneducated and their intellectual superiors. Delight in the fantastic is surely one of the minor rewards of poetic faith; but it is a reward denied to Castelvetro as an intellectual whose poetic faith was much less robust than the vulgar herd's.

Castelvetro's rejection of the fantastic betrays a man for whom no poetry is authentic that does not recreate the actual. It betrays him as one who unreasonably demands of the epic and dramatic poets a species of verisimilitude unsuited to the conventions of heroic poetry and heroic drama. Castelvetro never understood that many actions in heroic poetry are rightly of a kind not "to correspond to what is commonly encountered

in daily life" (p.296). In the ninth book of the *Iliad* (lines 185ff.) Odysseus, Ajax and Phoenix arrive at Achilles' hut to beg him to return to the field. They are courteously received by Achilles, who offers them wine and then orders that a feast be set before them. When the guests have had their fill of meat and drink Odysseus rises to plead with Achilles that he rejoin his comrades to save them from ruin. In the time between Achilles' words of welcome and the first words spoken by Odysseus, the time during which the meal was being prepared and then eaten, not a word was spoken by any of the six men in the company. In a narrative other than an epic that silence could have been criticized as an improbability; in the *Iliad* it must be accepted as an epic convention: table talk is not a suitable component of heroic poetry. In Trollope's *Belton Estate* (chap. 11) Clara and Captain Aylmer sit down to dinner two hours after they have plighted their troth. Clara has it in mind to make a confession to the Captain, but the subject was not suitable for table talk. The conventions of the realistic novel, however, which generally describes "what is commonly encountered in daily life," do not permit a man and a woman in their circumstances to sit silently through a meal. Trollope must represent them as engaged in conversation, but his design for the after-dinner hours required that they say nothing that the reader must know. That requirement he meets by introducing a servant: "Then they were in the dining-room, and as the servant remained there during the dinner, there was nothing in the conversation worth repeating." The verisimilitude that is not the verisimilitude of the epic has been well served.

Castelvetro's conception of verisimilitude is more Trollopian than Homeric. To him Homer is the almost flawless poet; he seldom names him without praise for his "superhuman genius." Only twice does he find him at fault, and both times his offense is against verisimilitude. The first offense occurs in the scene, already described, at the Skaian gate, where Helen at Priam's request names for him the Greek heroes in the Trojan plain. The second is the setting ashore of the sleeping Ulysses in Ithaca (*Od.* 13.116ff.). Aristotle mentions the episode as an improbability (24.60a 35-60b 1), but asserts that it is less than absurd because of the poet's vivid description of the beautiful scene in which the episode is set. Castelvetro is, as usual, unforgiving. He explains at great length why the episode is not to be tolerated and even concludes that it might have been made somewhat less improbable if Ulysses had been given a sleeping potion before he left Alcinous' court for Ithaca. That device, he reminds the reader, had been used by Saladin (*Dec.* 10.9) so that Messer Torello might be conveyed asleep by Saladin's necromancer "from Alexandria to Pavia and there set down asleep with many precious gifts in the church of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro" (p.265). But even that episode is not without its improbability. Saladin and Torello had first met in Pavia when Saladin was traveling

disguised as a merchant, a fact which in an earlier discussion of the denouement of that tale (p.136) had led Castelvetro to suspect that the necromancer had been invented out of hand for the purpose of speeding Torello to Pavia; for if Saladin had really kept a necromancer in his court "he would not have run the risks involved in visiting the countries of the West in the guise of a merchant to observe the preparations being made for the crusade against him, but would have availed himself of his necromancer's art to have himself conveyed speedily and safely to any destination he desired."

Castelvetro's affinity with the species of verisimilitude appropriate to realistic fiction predisposes him to undervalue the rhetorical teachings of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, and almost the art of rhetoric itself. Having observed in the world that "men use one style of expression in private and another in public" (p.185) and that the situations in which characters meet in dramas and epics are for the most part occasions for conversation and not for oratory, he can find little that is relevant to poets in the teachers of an oratory designed for delivery before "a senate, a court, or a popular audience" (p.185). The rhetoricians do not teach how "a person soliloquizes, engages in a private conversation, bewails some misfortune, prays, encourages another or strikes fear into him;" yet those and other situations like them are the very ones that poets for the most part represent in their poems. From the rhetoricians the poets may learn all the arts that make for effective argumentation; but the poet's characters are seldom engaged in proving and disproving; they generally speak to reveal their own ethos and to stir the emotions, especially those of pity and fear. If they are represented as engaged in an argument, verisimilitude requires that they do not reason like skilled rhetoricians, and poets whose characters are made to use "the sophisticated arguments appropriate to oratory are deserving of nothing but censure" (p.187). In short, "the oratory taught by the art of rhetoric is different in nature [*di diversa natura*] from that suited to narrative and dramatic poetry, being more magniloquent [*piu magnifica*]" (p.185). Trollope, never a student of rhetoric, would have understood and approved Castelvetro's reasoning and his conclusions. In effect, by turning his back on Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, Castelvetro turned his back on the style of ancient epic poetry and tragedy, where the language of everyday life is seldom heard. The pages that he devotes to rhetoric repudiate the rhetoric built in part on the examples of the ancient poets and offer a first sketch of the rhetoric of the prose narrative and drama of the future.

In a centenary tribute to James Joyce, Hugh Kenner wrote that "it seemed to [Joyce] 'stupid' of George Moore to make a character look up the time of a train that stopped in his suburb at the same minute every day: rather like looking up the time of the 11:00 o'clock mass. Fiction writers, even

'naturalists' like Moore, had long since fallen into the habit of just such little inattentions." No Italian critic of the sixteenth century would have approved Joyce's criticism of Moore half as heartily as Castelvetro, for it is precisely the kind of criticism that both his idea of the perfect poem and his temperamental delight in fault-finding frequently prompted him to make of all the poets that came under his scrutiny. Kenner attributes Moore's "stupidity" to inattention. Castelvetro's pages call attention to a considerable number of "stupid" errors that are the effects of that same cause. In the *Amphitryon*, he observes, Plautus has both Amphitryon and Sosia use the name of Hercules as an oath and as a means of invoking divine aid "before Hercules was born and before either suspected that he was to be born" (p.293). In the *Aeneid* (6.365-366) Virgil has Palinurus beg Aeneas to return to the "Velian harbor," thus calling Velia by a name it had not yet received in his time (p.293). Dante has Justinian say (*Par.* 6.73-75) that the torments of Hell cause Brutus to bark like a dog, though in the 34th canto of the *Inferno* he had made Virgil observe that Brutus endured those torments in silence (p.171). Petrarch in the first *capitolo* of his *Trionfo d'Amore* "tells of dreaming both of the beginning of his love [for Laura] and of her death," and Castelvetro cannot refrain from adding, "As if he had needed a miraculous dream to reveal to him what he knew well enough in his waking hours!" (p.63). Poets fall into errors for other reasons, ignorance being perhaps the commonest, as when Ariosto has one of his characters call Farraù by the insulting name of *marrano* some centuries before that term of abuse had been invented (p.293). But the most serious departures from truth are the deliberate falsifications of history. Virgil, for instance, represents Dido as Aeneas' contemporary (p.109), knowing that Aeneas lived long before Dido, and invents the story of Dido's illicit love of Aeneas, which is out of keeping with what was known to him about Dido's character (p.109). And he further invents the story of Aeneas' descent into Hades (p.109), a descent on which both history and tradition were silent before his time. Truth in all matters is of great advantage to poetry, "and for this reason among others, that if [poetry] represents what is known to be true precisely as it is known, the parts of the poem invented by the poet are readily acceptable as probable and are almost taken for true" (p.280).

Castelvetro says that of the eight qualities of the plot (III.a-h), which to him as to Aristotle was the soul of tragedy, possibility "is more important than any of the other seven and than all of them combined" (p.92). The hyperbolic form of that statement is a sure indication of the centrality of both possibility and verisimilitude in Castelvetro's conception of poetry. Castelvetrican drama and narrative are cunningly organized instruments for producing a variety of effects, and their organization is by and large authentically Aristotelian. Barilli quite rightly recognizes Cas-

telvetro as a precursor of the well-made novel – and he might have added the well-made play – of the nineteenth century.³⁸ But every Castelvetrican play being enacted on the stage is also a unique microcosm, its elements the recreations of persons and things and events observable in the world. Its resemblance to life may be too close to win the approval of Aristotelians, for whom poetry is life-like in the manner peculiar to poetry.³⁹ Aristotelians know that the dramatic soliloquy is an artifice, but they know also that it has a legitimate place on the stage, which is hospitable to artifices of many kinds. Not so Castelvetro. An audience, he believes, will take no pleasure in witnessing in the theatre actions that would never be seen in the world. In the *Esaminatione sopra la Ritorica a Caio Herennio* (pp. 142–43), Castelvetro observes that “a person with mind so occupied by a single thought that he is unaware of the absence of a second person with whom he might communicate may let drop a few words from his mouth, but they will not always form a sentence and will not be more than a few, since one does not normally speak at length when there is no one to hear him.” With this person in mind Castelvetro bids the reader “to mark the ineptitude of poets who represent a person as delivering a lengthy soliloquy on the stage.” Weinberg recognizes the discrepancy between the Aristotelian and the Castelvetrican conceptions of imitation, and attributes Castelvetro’s naturalism to the intellectual limitations of his audience.⁴⁰ A more likely reason is Castelvetro’s temperamental predilection for a drama so naturalistic that it will not admit on the stage a manner of speaking not met in real life.

But whatever its cause or causes, the Castelvetrican poem was an exotic growth in the critical milieu of sixteenth-century Italy, where Virgil reigned more securely than he had ever reigned before or would ever again. It is a poem that could not have been conceived but by a critic who not only admired the particularized narrative style of Homer more than the generalized style of Virgil, but may well have judged Boccaccio’s tales superior as *rassomiglianze* to the Homeric epics. (Even so, he believed [p.270] that those tales would have greatly gained in verisimilitude if Boccaccio “had given his seven ladies names like Francesca and Giovanna, which were common in the Florence of their day, instead of resorting to Greek names.”) In the company of Vida and Scaliger, Castelvetro was destined to preside over the emergence and development of the French classical drama,⁴¹ contributing to it, most conspicuously, the inflexible doctrine of the unities.⁴² The seventeenth was to be the century of his greatest eminence. After the decline of French classicism he ceased to be an active influence on the literature of Europe and became a critic read by other critics and the historians of literary criticism. But if his doctrines (other than that of the unities) had acquired a new authority and had been rightly understood, their effect on the development of modern drama and

the modern novel would surely have been that of reducing the distance between the world, the things "commonly encountered in daily life" (p. 296), and the verbal representations of them. Castelvetro often says, echoing Aristotle, that tragic and epic actions are magnificent actions; but when speaking for himself of poetic subjects in general he can say of them, like the anti-Aristotelian he often is, that they are of a kind suited to the understanding of the multitude, more specifically that they are like "the everyday happenings that are talked about among the people, the kind that resemble those reported in any one day's news and in histories" (p. 20). The formulation of that statement appears to be that of a critic whose thoughts were more often than not of a poetry less exalted than that which had formed the tastes of the Renaissance humanists. It is for this reason that the pages which he devotes to thought (III.16) tend to minimize the value of ancient rhetoric to the poets of his own time. But the critic who repudiates the magniloquence which ancient rhetoric contemplates is at the same time the critic by whom that rhetoric is never renounced. Castelvetro no sooner recognizes that the oratory of the ancient rhetoricians is "different in nature from that suited to narrative and dramatic poetry" than he adds that "the art of rhetoric as we know it is not without its value to the poet, for it can offer him part of what he needs to know to frame the less-than-magniloquent utterances suited to his characters" (p. 185). The rhetorical works of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, then, must not be cast away; properly studied they will yield doctrines that duly mastered will qualify the poet to invent a new rhetoric, a rhetoric by which he will successfully imitate the utterances of persons in typically poetic situations, as when they are soliloquizing, conversing, bemoaning some misfortune, offering a prayer, giving encouragement to others or striking fear into them. The gain that the new rhetoric will bring to narrative and dramatic poetry will be greater naturalness and appropriateness — the naturalness no less premeditated than the appropriateness — of thought and language. Castelvetro concludes a paragraph on the necessity of natural and appropriate thought and speech (p. 266) with the condemnation of a sonnet by Francesco Maria Molza in which the speaker, though a shepherd, speaks in a manner indistinguishable from Molza's own. That judgment, which condemns a single sonnet, effectively condemns the corpus of Renaissance pastoral poetry and strongly suggests that Castelvetro would not have approved without serious reservations the French classical drama, which owed much of its peculiar character to some of his own doctrines. It is not fanciful to suppose that Castelvetro would not have been scandalized to meet in a tragedy a drunken porter uttering the sentiments of a drunken porter in language natural and appropriate to his kind.

Castelvetro would have every component of a poem — its characters and their thoughts and words and actions — represented with an immediacy not

to be found in Virgil but present in Homer and even more conspicuously in Boccaccio. That immediacy was not unknown in the literatures of Europe in the two centuries between Castelvetro's death and the rise of Romanticism. But thanks to developments which were not wholly literary and owed nothing to Castelvetro's doctrines, Castelvetro's ideal poem (minus unities and meter) came into its own only after the decline of the Romantic movement and the emergence in those literatures of realism, naturalism, and *verismo*.

CASTELVETRO
ON THE ART OF POETRY

Part I

General Theory of Poetry

I

Poetry and History

[1.13]* If Aristotle or another had written a proper treatise on the art of history – and the art of history should logically have been treated before the art of poetry – poets and critics would have found the ideas in Aristotle's brief *Poetics* more useful in composing and judging poetry than they have or they might even have dismissed them as superfluous. It is therefore conceivable that Aristotle would never have written that work or would have written an even shorter one that for all its brevity would have been easier to comprehend. The soundness of this view will be clearly demonstrated, unless I am deceived, by the following considerations. Truth existed by nature before verisimilitude¹ and the thing represented before the representation. But since verisimilitude depends wholly upon truth and looks upon it as its model and precisely the same relationship exists between the representation and the thing represented, and since we cannot attain a right knowledge of dependent and reflecting things unless we first possess a knowledge of the things they depend upon and reflect, it necessarily follows that we cannot acquire the faculty of making right judgments about the adequacy and fidelity of representations and probabilities unless we first possess an accurate and exhaustive knowledge of the things represented and the truth. Then since history is the recital of memorable human actions that have happened and its distinguishing mark is truth, and poetry the recital of memorable human actions that may happen and its distinguishing mark verisimilitude; and since, again, history is a thing represented and poetry, as will be shown hereafter, a representation, no art of poetry so far written can possibly offer a complete and accurate knowledge of poetry because we still lack a complete and distinct knowledge of history, and future arts of poetry will continue to be less than serviceable as long as the art of history remains imperfectly known. That art has not yet been investigated, or at least not adequately; and if we recall that in Aristotle's time it had, for

*This reference, as all others on the first line of each new section and all cross-references within the text, is to Lodovico Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele Vulgarizzata e Sposta*, 2 vols., a cura di Wether Romani (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1979).

ought we know, hardly been touched, we cannot but conclude that the labors he expended on the *Poetics* were, one might say, in vain. For poetry, as we have said, borrows all its light from history, whose light as yet burns dimly if at all, and unable to borrow it poetry must wander in great darkness.

But even if we assume that the art of history had been investigated, as it should have been, before the art of poetry, we cannot be certain that the findings would have been relevant to writers on poetry unless we also assume that they would have shown, on the one hand, what is more and what less memorable and what is more and what less worthy of a place in history and, on the other, what is not memorable at all nor worthy of being related by historians; what kinds of events should be related briefly and in summary form and what kinds at length and in detail; the order in which the parts of a history should be arranged; when and where historical narratives permit the introduction of digressions and of descriptions of places, persons, and the like; whether the historian may or may not pass judgment on the things related in his history, praising some and condemning others, and draw from them lessons useful to his readers and to the political life of communities; whether he may, without offense to the art of history, treat certain matters in the manner of the poets, i.e. by means of a fiction told in the narrative or dramatic mode, or whether that is the exclusive prerogative of the art of poetry; and finally the kinds of language that are or are not appropriate to history in general and to certain passages in particular. These and others like them are the teachings that might have been found in a proper art of history; but since most of them are not peculiar to history, but are common to both history and poetry, it would have been idle and superfluous for anyone who had already expounded them in an art of history to include them in one on poetry. And so one of two things would necessarily have happened: an adequate treatise on history would have been thought sufficient to teach as much as is necessary for the writing of both history and poetry, and no one would have undertaken to write on the art of poetry, or if some one had he would have produced a much shorter book than the *Poetics*, and the principles he treated would have been neither as numerous as those found there nor as difficult, for he might well have been content to expound the few simple principles that are peculiar to poetry. Therefore the art of history should have been investigated before the art of poetry not only because history is anterior to poetry but also because we cannot come to a full knowledge of poetry before we already possess a full knowledge of history, upon which poetry depends and models itself and with which it shares most of the principles of its composition. This it does to such an extent that if we already had an art of history we could have refrained from the labor of writing a complete art of poetry, or at least the greater part of one, collecting and preserving only those principles — which are very few in number and perhaps not very difficult — that are peculiar to poetry instead of being obliged to produce one that is both very long and very difficult and, which is more important, not such that it can teach how poetry may be composed well and correctly.

The truth of what we have said will be further confirmed by the two following considerations. Lucian, George of Trebizond, Rodolphus Agricola,² and

others who have written on the art of history have not followed Aristotle's method in his *Poetics*, and even if they had, their success in teaching their art would have been no greater than it is; and writers of history never consult the principles of the art of poetry, and if they did would perhaps do so in vain. Yet since most of these principles are, as we have said, common to history and to poetry, they should, being appropriate and useful to poetry, be necessarily appropriate and useful to history, and both historians and writers on the art of history would undoubtedly have consulted them or could consult them. But since they are not appropriate or useful to history, and neither historians nor writers on the art of history ever consult them, and if they did would do so in vain, what will prevent us from surrendering to the force of these facts and under their constraint concluding that they are neither appropriate nor useful to poetry itself? But for the present enough has been said on this subject....

2

Plot the Peculiar Concern of Poetic Theory

[1.19] In the introductory paragraph of the *Poetics* (1. 47a 2) Aristotle indicates that it is part of his total program to tell "how plots must be constructed," using the plural *plots* because he intends in due course to consider a variety of them, not only those proper to tragedy and epic poetry, but the simple and the double¹ and other kinds as well. And if in that paragraph he names the plot alone of all the qualitative parts of poetry, that is not only because it enters into all poems, which without it can have no being, and is the principal part and, as it were, the soul of poetry, but also because the construction of plots is the peculiar concern of the art of poetry, a concern that is neither peculiar to nor shared by any other art. For human character is investigated by the philosophers and their findings appropriated and applied by the rhetoricians before it is investigated by the masters of poetry and their findings applied by the poets; the invention of the thought, as Aristotle himself will show, is the peculiar concern of rhetoric and is to be learned from it; and the handling of the language, which forms one of the subjects of this book on poetry, is for the most part the concern also of prose, especially if we exclude consideration of the principles of versification, which would seem to be the concern of the art of poetry, though Aristotle holds that they are the concern of another art, that of metrics, and should be learned from it. It is also clear that harmony, i.e., instrumental music, singing, and dancing, is not to be learned from the art of poetry, and the same is true of the spectacle, i.e., of the arts necessary to build the stage, make the costumes, and dress and otherwise prepare the actors for the stage. That being so, it is not to be wondered at that

Aristotle should concern himself exclusively with the plot and ignore the other qualitative parts ... for the master of poetry will have discharged his obligation to the poets if he but teaches them to select such previously constituted qualitative parts as will make suitable components of a good poem. And this is indeed what Aristotle will do....

3

Poetry Is Imitation

[I.23] Aristotle now (1. 47a 13–18) undertakes to define the general nature of poetry and to find the *differentiae* that determine its species. As we can see by consulting the introductory paragraph, this is the first task that he has set for himself. To ascertain the nature of poetry and its genus he seeks the one thing which all the subspecies of poetry, which are better known to us than its species, possess in common. That thing he finds to be imitation, and he therefore concludes that poetry is by nature imitation and that poetry in general is imitation.¹ To understand Aristotle's method more clearly, we must attend to the following considerations. Poetry in general is imitation Poetic imitation as a whole consists of three species: (1) the imitation determined by the medium employed (there are three such media: language, dancing, and music); (2) the imitation determined by its objects (that is, by the men imitated, who may be better than men in general, or worse, or like them); (3) the imitation determined by its mode (which may be one of three: the narrative, the dramatic, or a combination of the two).

The medium or media employed in the imitative process give to poetry a number of its subspecies.² If all three media are employed, the resulting subspecies are tragedy, comedy, and dithyrambic poetry, if only one medium is employed, we have epic poetry or dancing; the combination of the two media produces the arts of the flute and the lyre. The subspecies of poetry are also determined by the objects imitated and the modes adopted in imitating them. The imitation of men who are better than men in general or worse or like them results in three kinds of epic poetry and three of dithyrambic; the imitation of the better sort of men results only in tragedy and that of the worse sort only in comedy. The subspecies resulting from the mode of the imitation are dithyrambic poetry when the mode is purely narrative, tragedy and comedy when it is purely dramatic, and epic poetry when it is a combination of the two. Aristotle's method, then, was to take the subspecies of poetry, viz. tragedy, comedy, epic and dithyrambic poetry, and the arts of the flute and of the lyre, as the means of ascertaining the nature of poetry in general, and finding that the one thing they all possess in common is imitation, he concluded that poetry in general is imitation. In like manner, if we undertook

to discover the nature of animals and to ascertain their general nature, we would consider a number of their subspecies—the giant, the dwarf, the man of average stature, the horse, the ox, the eagle, the pigeon, the sturgeon, the carp, the laurel, and the oak—and finding that the one thing they all possessed in common was that they were living substance, conclude that animals are living substance and that living substance is their general nature.

Our conclusion would be no different if we considered the species instead of the subspecies, and proceeded in this fashion. Animals are divided into three species. The first consists of those that are at once rational, sensitive, and vegetative; the second of those that are sensitive and vegetative; and the third of the vegetative. All three species of animals have this in common, that they are living substance; therefore all animals are living substance. This second method would produce results of equal validity if followed in our own investigation. If Aristotle had followed it, he would have proceeded in the following fashion. Poetry produced by the media of language, dancing, and music; poetry which represents persons who are better than men in general, or worse, or like them; narrative and dramatic poetry, and poetry that combines the two modes—all these species of poetry possess this in common, that they are imitation; therefore poetry is by nature imitation, and imitation constitutes its genus. But Aristotle, as I have shown, chose to use the subspecies and not the species of poetry as the means of ascertaining the nature of poetry and its genus. Since, however, some readers might not agree that the general nature of poetry had been found if they were simply told that it is imitation, with no effort made to distinguish poetic imitation from the imitation employed by painting, sculpture, and the other arts—just as if they should ask what an animal was, they would not be satisfied with the reply that it is living substance unless that substance were clearly distinguished from that of God, the angels, and disembodied souls—Aristotle draws a clear distinction between the imitation employed by poetry and that employed by the other arts, saying that by poetic imitation he means imitation which has for its object men who are better than men in general, or worse, or like them; for its medium language, dancing, and music; and for its mode narrative, drama, and a combination of the two. Aristotle's procedure is exactly the one we might adopt if having said that an animal is living substance we should distinguish that living substance from the living substance proper to God, the angels, and disembodied souls, saying that we apply our term to substance animated by the rational, sensitive, and vegetative soul, or by the sensitive and vegetative soul, or only by the vegetative soul. This distinction would clarify matters because though God, the angels, and disembodied souls are truly living substance, their substance is not animated by the vegetative soul; for God is substance animated by the rational soul, and the substance proper to the angels and to disembodied souls is animated by both the rational and the sensitive souls, as evidenced by the torments of the rebel angels and of the souls of the damned.

Now we must not ignore the fact that the only species of poetry that Aristotle here discovers are those which in his time were recited or enacted in public for the people's pleasure and that some of those species were performed with

the accompaniment of music and dancing in the manner that will be seen hereafter. But it would seem that since when searching for the general nature of poetry he took account of the arts of the flute and of the lyre he would not here be silent on the subject of the dance, for he holds dancing to be a species of poetry.³ Perhaps the silence is to be explained by the supposition that he felt no need to name dancing as well as music because neither music nor dancing is a necessary constituent of poetry, both being no more than means for enhancing its pleasure-giving capabilities. Aristotle, then, opens his argument, as we have shown, by adducing the subspecies of poetry as conclusive evidence that poetry in general is imitation. The first of these is epic poetry, which he names first because it employs a single medium, the one which seems to be natural to poetry, namely language. (I refrain from adding that tragedy owes its essential characteristics to epic poetry and that therefore in a discussion such as this epic poetry should rightly be accorded precedence over tragedy.) He then names tragedy and comedy, which also produce their imitations by means of language, but which are also capable of employing the media of music and dancing. After these he names dithyrambic poetry, whose media are also language, music, and dancing, but with this difference, that it employs all three of its media simultaneously and uninterruptedly, whereas tragedy and comedy make use of music and dancing only at intervals.

It would seem that having spoken both of the poetry that employed the single medium of language and of another poetry that employed the three media of language, music, and dancing Aristotle should also speak of the poetry of the dance, which employs a single medium (rhythm), since the poetry of the dance is sometimes performed without the use of any other medium than rhythm: yet no mention of the dance is to be found in the passage under consideration, either because the *Poetics* is not a finished and duly polished treatise or because Aristotle deemed it sufficient to name only the arts of the flute and of the lyre because the music of these two instruments was always accompanied by dancing (he will soon say [47a 23–27] that “the arts of the flute and of the lyre employ only the media of music and rhythm”) though it is possible to have dancing without music (“certain dancers produce imitations with the medium of rhythm, without music”). And it appears clearly from this example and from the words that follow it that considered in connection with its medium, poetry consists not only of language accompanied, either simultaneously or separately, by music and dancing, but also of dancing alone or of dancing accompanied by music. It appears also that actions employing the single medium of the dance or the double one of dance and music were performed before the public either before or after actions in the narrative or dramatic mode that employed the single medium of language and sometimes by themselves alone, without being either preceded or followed by actions of the latter kind. It should finally be observed that dancing and music have allied themselves with the various species of poetry with less difficulty than have painting, sculpture, and other arts of their kind because they form pleasing accompaniments to language, the natural and most important medium of poetry, and their manner of accompanying language results in different species

of poetry. This can never happen through the other imitative arts of painting and sculpture.

4

Poetry and Painting

[I.28] Aristotle asserts (I. 47a 18–20) that “there are those who imitate many things with color and form, some by art, others by practice,” thereby indicating that art and practice constitute the modes of the arts which employ color and form as their media.¹ These modes appear not to bear a very close resemblance to the modes of poetry, which determine the species of a poem; for whereas the narrative or dramatic mode of treating an action—that is, the imitation of both the language and the things of a possible action with language, and the imitation of its language with language and its things with things—determines the species of the resulting poem, the species of a painting or a sculpture is not determined by its mode, that is, by whether it is the product of art or practice.

And yet Aristotle could have expounded the modes of poetry with greater precision if, while still going to painting for his analogy, he had dwelt upon certain aspects of that art that bear a greater resemblance to poetry than those to which he has drawn our attention. His argument might then have run in this fashion. Poetry represents possible actions either by employing language to represent language and things to represent things, or by employing language alone to represent both language and things. Of these two modes of representing actions the first gives the more lifelike representation. We have an analogous phenomenon in painting, which represents its objects either by reproducing their natural colors or by using only light and shade. The latter representations, which we call monochromes, are analogous to narrative poetry, which employs language only to represent both language and things, and paintings in color are analogous to dramatic poetry, which employs language to represent language and things to represent things. We must not conclude these remarks without observing that the less lifelike representations include the poetry which represents dancing and other things with dancing only, while music and the dance are to be classified with the more lifelike representations when they represent music and dancing. In like manner we classify language with the more or less lifelike representations according as it represents language only or both language and things.

5

*Imitations Require Metre*¹

[1.30] So far Aristotle has distinguished certain species of poetry from one another by determining the medium or media that they employ to produce their imitations and has said that some species (flute-playing, lyre-playing, piping) made use of the two media of music and rhythm and another (dancing) of the single medium of rhythm. He now (1. 47a 28–47b 24) adds that there is an additional species of poetry that produces its imitations with a single medium. That species is epic poetry, and its medium is language. The recognition of a species of poetry using the single medium of language can raise two questions in the reader's mind, the first being whether an epic poem may be written in prose, seeing that prose was the medium in which Sophron and Xenarchus composed their mimes and Plato his dialogues. Aristotle's answer is that it may not, though perhaps out of respect for his master Plato he says, less categorically, that prose has not been commonly used by epic poets nor commonly accepted as a proper medium for their poetry.... What Aristotle says is that epic poetry imitates "with bare language," by which he means language without the attire and the accompaniment of other media, namely, music and dancing. But lest the phrase "with bare language" be taken to mean "with prose," he adds, "that is, with metrical language...." But the two phrases may also be taken in the same sense of "with a humble or an exalted metre....," for Aristotle knows that epic poetry has used every kind of metre, as he will show by citing the example of Chaeremon.... The first question raised by the passage under consideration, then, is whether epics can be written in prose, seeing that epic poetry is a species of imitation using the single medium of language and that the mimes of Sophron and of Xenarchus and Plato's dialogues are imitations in prose; Aristotle's answer is that prose has not been commonly used in the making of epics and therefore is not to be approved as a fit medium because it has been used by no more than a few poets.²

Let us note, in the first place, Aristotle's opinion that if the mimes of Sophron and of Xenarchus and the dialogues of Plato were to be accepted as authentic species of poetry, they would have to be classified as epic poems, that is, as poetry of the species that employs the single medium of language. Yet it would seem that since they may also be accepted as drama—for they are no less dramatic than tragedy and comedy—they should be classified as poetry of the species that employs the triple medium of language, music, and dancing. We must bear in mind, however, that Aristotle's classification does not take into account the proper manner in which mimes and dialogues should have been used but only reflects the manner in which they were used in his time, when they were never performed on the stage but were simply read by individuals in the privacy of their studies or by masters and their pupils in the schools. On the other hand we have it on the testimony of Plutarch (*Symposiacs* 7. 8) that after Aristotle's time some of Plato's dialogues were performed by

schoolboys in the manner of tragedies and comedies.

It will be well now to point out the errors of a number of scholars, some of whom hold that the mimes of Sophron were in verse, and others that the mimes of Sophron and those of Xenarchus, as well as the dialogues of Plato, though in prose, are yet a kind of epic poetry.³ The authority upon which these opinions rest is a passage from Aristotle's treatise *On the Poets* quoted by Athenaeus in his *Deipnosophistae* (11. 505c). That these opinions are erroneous is shown not only by the passage in the *Poetics* now under discussion, which proves the contrary, but also by the passage quoted by Athenaeus, once it is properly interpreted and understood. For if the mimes of Sophron and of Xenarchus, which he mentions in the *Poetics*, had been in verse and had in addition been imitations, which, as he tells us in his treatise *On the Poets*, the mimes of Sophron and the Socratic dialogues were, how could he possibly have doubted that they were to be classified as epics or some other species of poetry? And how could a man of Aristotle's acute judgment have placed them in the same class as the dialogues of Plato, which are in prose? Moreover, it has already been demonstrated that the mimes and dialogues in question, being in prose, cannot be classified as epic poems, for epic poetry, as we have seen and shall see more clearly in the sequel, is and may be only in verse. Therefore a close study of Aristotle's words in the *Poetics* will in no way warrant the conclusion that the mimes of Sophron were in verse and that these mimes and those of Xenarchus, as well as Plato's dialogues, are kinds of epic poetry.

As for the passage from Aristotle quoted by Athenaeus, it will not yield its true meaning unless we pay due heed to the context from which it is taken. The talk is about Plato, and the observation is made that in writing his dialogues Plato violated the very laws which he had laid down for his ideal commonwealth, from which he would have banished Homer and all imitative poetry. To prove that Plato's dialogues are imitations the speaker invokes the authority of Aristotle, who in his book *On the Poets* had said: "Are we not therefore affirming that the mimes attributed to Sophron, which are not in verse, and those of Alexamenus of Teos, which were composed before the Socratic dialogues, are dialogues and imitations?"⁴ This may be interpreted: "If the mimes of Sophron and of Alexamenus, though written in prose, are yet called imitations, why should not Plato's dialogues, which are modelled upon those mimes, be also known by the same name?" Aristotle, then, does not say that the mimes of Sophron, named both in the passage of the *Poetics* under consideration and in Athenaeus, are in verse but that they are in prose; nor does he say that they and the mimes of Xenarchus and the dialogues of Plato should both be given the name of epic poems. What he asserts is that the mimes of Sophron and those of Alexamenus, as well as Plato's dialogues, are imitations. But their being imitations does not suffice to place them in the category of epic poetry, for as we have said and shall repeat an imitation must be in verse before it can be called an epic poem. Aristotle, therefore, denies that Plato's dialogues and the mimes of Sophron and of Xenarchus may be called epic poems, and the singular form which the three writers imposed upon their works seems to provoke his disapproval of them as eccentrics and

strayers from the way of their predecessors. Yet we should not, perhaps, be so swayed by Aristotle's censure as to withhold our approval or even our praise from their writings if despite their singularity they possess qualities that may be rightly admired. This is a question to which we shall presently return.

6

Medleys of Prose and Verse

[1.34] Now since Aristotle seems not to approve of the dialogues of Plato and the mimes of Sophron and of Xenarchus, which, though imitations, and therefore essentially poems, are in prose, because they stray from the path laid by earlier writers, shall we on our part approve of the writings, both in Latin and in the vulgar tongue, of some authors who have produced medleys of prose and verse unlike anything known among the ancient Greeks and Romans, if these works are poetic only in the sense that they are imitations? This we shall never do, first because to do so would be to defy the authority of Aristotle, who seems not to approve of such unexampled innovations, and secondly because a medley of prose and verse is not a normal offspring of the human mind, but a monster not unlike the centaur, which is fabled to have sprung from the union of man and horse. We do not believe, however, that all such medleys are monsters and therefore to be condemned. But before we can determine those that are we must divide medleys into three classes. The first will include those which develop the subject in both prose and verse. Examples of such works in Latin literature are the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter, the first part of the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, the *Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius, and the *De Nuptiis Philoligiae* of Martianus Capella; in the vernacular literature, the *Arcadia* of Giacomo Sannazaro. The second class will consist of those which are in verse, but contain an introduction in prose. Examples of such works are Statius' *Silvae* and Martial's *Epigrams*.¹ The third and last class will consist of those which are in prose, but contain a few lines of verse which the author quotes to enforce a point or because they had been sung by some one mentioned in the work. Examples of the former are to be found in Cicero and of the latter in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Of these three classes the last is not, in our opinion, subject to censure, but is rather, as may be clearly seen, both commendable and pleasing, since in them the verse and prose have not been made to form a single body. The first two classes, however, in which verse and prose are combined into a single body, are to be considered monstrous, the first more so than the second.

7

On Dialogues

[1.35] Let us now consider whether Plato's dialogues are to be praised or blamed for reasons other than their departure from precedent, disregarding the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus, which have been lost owing to the ravages of time and can be known only imperfectly. Our discussion will gain in clarity if we consider all the compositions to which following the Greeks we give the name of *dialogues*. These compositions are of three kinds. The first kind may be mounted on the stage and may therefore be called dramatic, for the interlocutors actually converse with one another like the characters in tragedies and comedies. Of this kind are some of Plato's dialogues and most of Lucian's. A second kind, which may be called historical or narrative, cannot be mounted on the stage because the author writes as a historian and simply quotes what his various interlocutors have said. Most of Cicero's dialogues are of this kind. The rest represent a combination of the two kinds. In them the author first speaks as a historian and then introduces his interlocutors to speak dramatically, in the manner of tragic and comic personages. The first part of these dialogues cannot be mounted on the stage, the second can be. Cicero wrote a few dialogues of this kind.

Dialogues have or may have defects common to all three kinds, and have or may have others peculiar to each. One of the defects which are or may be common to all three kinds is a subject unsuited to a popular audience as being beyond the range of minds unrefined by the arts and sciences. That this is a defect becomes evident if we regard not only the dialogues of the first kind, which may be mounted on the stage and attain their perfection only on the stage, but also those of the second and third kinds, which in so far as they are historical wholly or in part should not properly treat subjects unsuited to a popular audience. Now if a dialogue may be performed on the stage, as those of the first kind may be wholly and those of the third in part, it follows of necessity that its audience will consist of the common people and the rude multitude, for whom and for whose exclusive pleasure drama and the stage were invented. But if the audience will be of this kind, it follows, again of necessity, that the subjects must be of a kind suited to that multitude, who are not and cannot be capable of engaging in and understanding disputations on the arts and sciences, being unqualified to comprehend anything beyond earthly events under fortune's sway.¹ What is more, subjects suited to such an audience are required not only of dialogues which may be staged, but also of historical dialogues, as we shall show when we come to speak of the matter peculiar and appropriate to history. Plato, Cicero, and many others have erred gravely in that their dialogues have not dealt with matter of this kind. The other defect which is or may be common to all three kinds is their being in prose, for an author should never write in prose unless his subject is truth and not fiction, prose not being appropriate to dialogues invented in their en-

tirety by the writer's own genius, i.e., dialogues which, like those of the authors just named, were never really engaged in by the persons represented in them; for as verse is the firmest possible evidence that the subject it sets forth is, as will appear in due course, not historical but imaginary, so prose should be equally firm evidence that the subject it sets forth is not imaginary but historical.

Each of the three kinds of dialogues has some defect peculiar to itself. Those of the first kind, for instance, must be spoken in a low voice. This renders them entirely useless, since conversation in a low voice cannot be heard by an audience and consequently cannot be understood. Yet if such dialogues are to attain their perfection, they should, as we have said, be presented on the stage. When so presented, however, the interlocutors cannot properly raise their voices above a conversational tone; if they do, and speak loudly enough to be heard, they will be taken to be either deaf or insane. This defect is not shared by dialogues that are composed in verse, for verse is properly spoken with a loud voice, and those who speak it so will not appear to be unsound of mind or hearing. These considerations will enable us to judge how commendable are those of our contemporaries who have composed tragedies and comedies in prose.

Dialogues of the second kind suffer from two defects, a less than sufficient verisimilitude and triviality, both of which more than any others mar the perfection of history. They suffer from the first defect because the writer of prose histories, who, unlike the poet cannot count on the favor of the Muses or hope for their divine gift of recollection, is not likely to be endowed with a memory so tenacious that having taken due note of every act and gesture of his interlocutors and stored every question and answer securely in his mind he should after some days and sometimes after many years succeed in writing a true and faithful account of what he had seen and heard; they suffer also from the second defect because history being the record of uncommon and memorable events such dialogues cannot be other than trivial when they represent things unworthy of remembrance or preservation, as are questions and answers that are of no account whatever and actions that serve no purpose but that of bringing the speakers vividly before the mind's eye. And they are the more trivial the more nearly they approach the type of dialogue in which the interrogator never opposes or contradicts the respondent, but puts questions to him only so that the latter may deliver himself of certain opinions or impart certain scientific or artistic doctrines so that it may be ascertained whether his knowledge of a given subject is complete. This defect mars a number of Cicero's dialogues, especially his *Partitiones Oratoriae*, and the second and third books of Pietro Bembo's dialogues on the vulgar tongue.

Finally dialogues of the third kind, which as we have said combine the methods of the first two, suffer from a defect peculiar to themselves, the self-defeating yoking together of two incompatible elements. For if a writer intends to compose drama that will afford the pleasure peculiar to drama, he will surely defeat his own purpose if he treats some of his matter in the narrative mode, which will destroy every trace of verisimilitude in the dramatic

portions. And how, indeed, can dramatized matter present the appearance of truth if the dramatist confesses in his own person or in another's that it is a fiction? This error is committed not only by many prose writers but by verse writers as well, by Plautus and Terence, for instance, who in their translations from the Greek comic poets make the speaker of the prologue disclose the argument of the plot about to be enacted and by so publishing the fact that the story is a fiction produce an effect the opposite of the one that should properly be contemplated.

There is a fourth kind of dialogue which differs widely from the three kinds so far discussed and which represents dialogues between animals or plants or other inanimate beings. (Aesop produced excellent dialogues of this kind, which are held by some [Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 5. 11. 19] to have been invented by Hesiod.) The difference between those three kinds and this last lies in its subject matter, which is neither the true nor the probable but the untrue and the improbable. It is not the true because if it were it would tell of some miraculous events the knowledge of which would surely have been transmitted to us through history or oral tradition: and it is not the probable because if it were it would tell not of some imaginary miracle but of one with some claim to historicity, and events of their kind must be set down as improbabilities because they happen but rarely and when they do are reported as singular novelties either in oral tradition or in written records, as witness the account of Balaam's ass (*Num.* 2:28), which uttered human speech, and the bull (*Livy* 35. 21) which cried, "Rome, beware!" We may therefore conclude that these dialogues represent neither truths nor probabilities but lies.

It must be borne in mind, however, that though the dialogues in question offer us neither truths nor probabilities they are not therefore to be despised, for their fictions afford pleasure and at the same time instruct without imposing undue strains upon the mind. They are in fact to be seen not as unredeemed lies but as species of analogues and of the figures known as *prosopopeias*, to both of which they doubtless owe both their origin and their form. The pleasure they give us derives from their astounding novelty, which is also the source of that given by miracles and by *prosopopeias* as well. To this it should be added that reading them we derive no small pleasure from the suspense we feel before we descry the end toward which this or that dialogue is tending, which is to impart to us true notions of right and wrong and to induce us to do or to refrain from doing some particular thing. And because they treat matter of a kind suited to the understanding of the simple and the ignorant, they do not fatigue or overtax the minds of their readers as do dialogues which also aim at imparting knowledge or persuading us to act against our inclinations but with matter of a more intellectually demanding sort. And this is no small boon.

But because these dialogues are designed to teach and to demonstrate the soundness of what they teach, they ought properly to be authored by philosophers, who are masters of moral doctrine, or by rhetoricians, whose province is eloquence and the art of persuasion. If this is so, I fail to see how their matter, even when suited to the rude understanding of the common peo-

ple, can form a proper subject for poetry, nor how we can commend Socrates, who made a poem out of matter of this kind (*Phaedo* 61 A), or others who did the same in later ages, and especially our contemporary Gabriello Faerno, the author of *Centum Fabulae ex Antiquis Auctoribus Delectae*.

8

Metre Does Not Make the Poem or Determine its Species

[1.40] We now come to Aristotle's answer to the second question which the passage under consideration may give rise to in the reader's mind, namely, whether metre is of itself sufficient to make a poem, a question which may well arise when we consider on the one hand that the epic, which is truly a species of poetry, took its name from its metre, and on the other hand that though epic poetry may be composed in a variety of metres, it does not change its species with every change of metre. Aristotle's answer is that metre is not of the essence of poetry, for the nature of the poem remains constant whether it is composed in one metre, in several, or in all.... The generality of men and the ignorant, he asserts (1. 47b 13-16), distinguish poets from one another by the metres in which they write and not by the kinds of imitation which they produce, calling some, for example, elegiac poets because they compose in the elegiac metre and others iambic poets because they compose in the iambic metre. These people, he maintains, are mistaken; for the mere use of metre does not make one a poet, and what distinguishes one kind of poet from another is not his kind of metre but his kind of imitation, and especially the kind of matter he imitates. To prove his contention Aristotle offers the following argument (1. 47b 17-20): take two subjects, the one unpoetic (physical nature, treated by Empedocles) and the other poetic (the wrath of Achilles or the return of Ulysses from Calypso's island to Ithaca, both treated by Homer) and treat both in the heroic metre.¹ That metre superimposed on the poetic matter will make Homer a poet, but superimposed on the unpoetic matter will not avail to make a poet of Empedocles. We may therefore conclude that what makes a poet and determines the class of poets into which he will fall is not his metre but his matter.

This argument will not bear scrutiny, as will be seen if we invert its terms and instead of positing two kinds of matter (poetic and unpoetic) and one kind of language (metrical), we posit one kind of matter (poetic) and two kinds of language (metrical and unmetrical). If a writer treats the same poetic matter in both metrical and unmetrical language, he will be a poet in the metrical composition but not the unmetrical. Therefore what determines whether one

is a poet or a poet of a certain kind is not the matter but the metre.

Aristotle's argument being ineffectual, we may perhaps succeed in proving his point by offering two arguments that he failed to advance. (1) Take on the one hand a humble poetic subject; imitate, that is, inferior men of the kind found in pastoral poetry such as the *Eclogues* of Virgil, and on the other a lofty poetic subject, royal personages of the kind found in Virgil's *Aeneid*, and treat both in the heroic metre. The metre will not avail to make the *Eclogues* a heroic poem like the *Aeneid* nor Virgil, as their author, a heroic poet. On the contrary, as the author of the *Eclogues* Virgil will be a poet of one kind, and his work a poem of one kind, and as the author of the *Aeneid* he will be a poet of another kind and his work a poem of another kind; and these differences will be the result not of his metre but of his matter. We may conclude, therefore, that it is not the metre but the matter that makes one a poet and determines the class of poets into which he will fall. (2) Take, on the one hand, a humble kind of metre, the elegiac, and on the other a lofty kind, the heroic, and treat the same matter in both. If the matter so treated is superior men, that is, royal personages, you will find that both poems will be royal; that the poet, considered as the author of one poem as well as the other, will be a poet of one and the same kind and that the metre employed will count for nothing as a determinant of the class under which both the poem and its poet will fall. Repeat the process for a pastoral subject and you will arrive at precisely the same conclusions.² We may therefore conclude that it is the matter and not the metre, whatever its kind, that makes the poet and determines the kind of poet he shall be.

9

History and the Arts and Sciences Not Fit Subjects for Poetry

[1.43] Aristotle asserts (1. 47b 16-20) that natural philosophy, which was expounded metrically by Empedocles, is not proper matter for poetry and that the same is true of the arts of music¹ and medicine. From these assertions we confidently conclude that no art or science can constitute proper matter for poetry and that artistic and scientific subjects cannot rightly be expounded metrically. From another assertion of the same kind on a later page (8. 51a 36-51b5) we shall draw another conclusion: the history of things that have happened cannot furnish fit matter for poetry. These two conclusions have cruelly troubled the minds of the most famous men of letters of our time, who have found it distasteful in the extreme that the glorious name of poet should be withdrawn from many authors who have injudiciously produced metrical

compositions on unpoetic matter, as Nicander, Serenus, Girolamo Fracastoro, and others have on medicine; Aratus, Manilius, Giovanni Pontano, and others on astronomy; Empedocles and Lucretius on natural philosophy; Hesiod and Virgil on the art of agriculture; and Lucan, Silius Italicus, Girolamo Fracastoro, and many others on historical subjects.² Men of letters of our time, as I have said, are strongly averse to condemning these honored names for having erred in their choice of subjects, and so preferring to challenge the authority of Aristotle, whom the world holds to be an oracle of truth who cannot be contradicted without diffidence, to stigmatizing so many worthy versifiers as non-poets, they have ardently devoted their energies to composing epistles and arts of poetry in which they clearly express opinions unmistakably opposed to Aristotle's, saying that there is no sound reason why he should exclude the arts, the sciences, and history from the subjects of authentic poetry.³ But I, who in this matter am at one with Aristotle, who I think has here discovered an incontrovertible truth, believe that I can adduce the reasons that have made me of one mind with him, and though they may not be the very ones that led him to his conclusions, they are perhaps not altogether unlike them.

Some of these opinions I have already expressed incidentally and have assumed in expounding various matters. They are the following. Poetry is the image and imitation of history. And just as history consists of two principal parts, matter and language, poetry likewise consists of those same two parts. But the two parts are not identical in both. The matter of history is not supplied by the historian's genius but by the course of earthly events or by the manifest or hidden will of God, and its language, though supplied by the historian, is that of men engaged in ordinary discourse. But the matter of poetry is invented and imagined by the poet's genius,⁴ and its language is not that of ordinary discourse, since men do not address one another in verse, but is ordered metrically by the poet. Now though the matter of poetry must resemble the matter of history, it must not be identical with it; if it were it would not be its image or imitation, and not being that it would be the production of a writer who had shirked the labor of invention and consequently had given no proof of the acuteness of genius⁵ that its invention would have required. For this reason he would merit no praise, least of all the praise which would win for him the name of a being more akin to gods than to men, the praise, that is, which men bestow on one who knows how to compose a history which he himself has imagined of things that have never happened and which is no less delightful or less probable than one produced by the course of human events or the infinite providence, hidden or manifest, of God. For when a poet treats historical matter, when he tells of things that have actually happened, he shirks all labor of invention, and his performance will not declare him a good or bad poet, that is, will not reveal his capacity or incapacity for inventing and imitating things similar to the truth. Seeing this the world will deny him all praise and indeed will heap blame upon him for having lacked the intelligence to recognize the proper object of poetic imitation and will dismiss him as a wretch and a deceiver who sought to win the undeserved commendation of all who heard or read him by duping them into accepting as poetry

unpoetic matter inside a brightly colored shell of metrically ordered language.⁶ Hence Lucan, Silius Italicus, and Fracastoro as the author of his *Joseph* are rightly to be removed from the ranks of the poets and their writings to be denied the glorious name of poetry, for they have treated matter that had already been treated by the historians or, if it had not, they have in any case treated events that had actually happened and not actions of their own invention.

Hence, again, it is clear that the arts and sciences cannot rightly be regarded as poetic matter and that none of them can form the acceptable subject of a poem. For the phenomena that form the subject of a science or an art have already been considered and comprehended both through long experience of them and through their probable or necessary causes by philosophers and students of the arts, so that for the poet they are subjects of the same order as historical works and events that have already happened. In treating such subjects the poet merely clothes with metrical language matter which has been discovered and expounded by others and of which it may in some fashion be said that its history had been written, and having accomplished no more than that he cannot justly lay claim to the title of poet. Therefore it need occasion no surprise that Empedocles, Lucretius, Nicander, Serenus, Aratus, Manilius, Fracastoro as the author of *Syphilis*, Giovanni Pontano of *Urania*, Hesiod of *Works and Days*, and Virgil of the *Georgics* are not numbered among the poets; for that name would rightly have been denied them even if they had used verse to expound some science or art first discovered by themselves and not matter appropriated from some philosopher or student of the arts. The reason for this is that even if they had discovered that science or that art by their own intellectual efforts⁷ they would have discovered no more than what always has been and always will be in the nature of things upon which the science and the art both rest and would have performed the office of the good philosopher and the good student of the arts but not the good poet, whose function is by the exertion of his intellectual faculties to imitate human actions under fortune's sway as they truly are and through his imitations to provide pleasure for his audiences, leaving the discovery of the hidden truths of natural and contingent things to the philosopher and the student of the arts, who have their own way, and one quite different from that of the poet, of offering the world profit and pleasure.

But there is another and more obvious reason why the arts and sciences cannot supply matter for poetry. It is that poetry was invented for the sole purpose of providing pleasure and recreation, by which I mean to provide pleasure and recreation to the souls of the common people and the rude multitude, who are incapable of understanding the rational proofs, the distinctions, and the arguments, all of them subtle and nothing like the talk normally heard among the unlearned, which philosophers make use of in their investigations of the truth of things and students of the arts in constituting the arts; and, not understanding them, it is only natural that they should hear them with annoyance and displeasure, for we are all naturally annoyed beyond measure when others speak of matters exceeding our intellectual reach. And so if we conceded that the arts and sciences could supply proper matter to the poets,

we should be obliged to concede also either that poetry was not invented to give pleasure or that it was not invented for the ignorant, but that its purpose was to teach and its only audience persons disciplined by the study of letters and exercised in disputations. That these views are false will be proved in the pages that follow.

Now since poetry was invented for the pleasure and recreation of the common people, its subjects must be things suited to their understanding and therefore capable of giving them pleasure. Such things are the everyday happenings that are talked about among the people, the kind that resemble those reported in any one day's news and in histories. This is the reason for our contention that as regards its matter poetry is an image or an imitation of history. And being an imitation of history, poetry not only brings glory to its inventor and entitles him to the name of poet, but offers more pleasure than the histories of actual events. The reasons for this will be given in the proper place. To the matter of poetry is added metre, a marvelous and delightful mode of speech. One of the reasons why poetic matter is treated metrically has already been given; it is that metre renders it possible for the speaker on the stage to speak without impropriety in a loud voice and so to make himself quite easily heard by his audience. The other reasons will be offered below (III.5d; 1.253). But if the arts and sciences lie beyond the intellectual reach of the common people, poets should not only refrain from taking artistic and scientific matters as subjects of whole poems, but should also guard against introducing such matters into any part of them. In this regard Lucan and Dante are especially and needlessly at fault, for they both made use of astronomical lore to designate the seasons of the year and the hours of the day and night, a fault that cannot be imputed to Homer or to Virgil in his *Aeneid*. For this reason I cannot but wonder a little at Quintilian, who asserts (*Inst. Or.* 1. 4. 4) that one cannot be a good student of the poets unless he is schooled in both astronomy and philosophy....

Now the statement that as regards its matter poetry is not history but an imitation of history is to be interpreted with sobriety and moderation; for when the poet's story is one of kings and divine beings poetry and history are, to a certain point, identical, and then poetry is history and not an *imitation* of history. To what point, and how, and why, are questions that will be fully answered in the proper place (III.5d; 1.251).

IO

Metre Conceded to Oracles

[1.47] Because verse is, as we have said, a marvelous and delightful mode of speech, the use of it may be conceded to oracles as well as to poetic matter, for we know that in ancient times oracles were delivered in verse, and it is

reasonable to expect that a divinity should speak in a loftier style than that common among men. For this reason, believing that Plato's language was superior to any spoken by other men and perhaps the loftiest attainable by a mortal, Cicero said (*Brutus* 31) that if Jove had to speak a human language he would speak no other than that of Plato. Cicero's judgement is confirmed by Valerius Maximus (*Facta et Dicta* 8. 7. 3), while Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 10. 1. 81) asserts that he speaks as one moved by the spirit of Apollo. Again, it should be permissible to treat metrically the matter of which laws are made, as did Lycurgus when he composed the laws which he delivered to the Lacedaemonians,¹ both because all laws are the gift of God and certain lawgivers claim to have received them from His very mouth and so should not be denied a privilege accorded to oracles, and because metre renders it less difficult for them to be preserved in a nation's memory, verse being more easily committed to memory and remembered than prose. Finally metre is not to be denied to those maxims, sayings, and proverbs that teach the wise conduct of life, like those to be found in the *Golden Verses* of Pythagoras, the verses of Phocylides, and the *Tesoretto* of Brunetto Latini, for these sayings are of no less value than laws and seem in fact to be divine oracles rather than formulations of human wisdom.² And it is probable that Hesiod did not hesitate to employ metre in composing the maxims which constitute his *Works and Days*, which were subsequently learned by the young as rules for the good life, because of their great number and that he saw fit to add to them a few rules on agriculture in the form of maxims not because he desired, as Virgil did later in his *Georgics*, to write an art of agriculture, but because of the moral benefits to be derived from the cultivation of the soil....

II

Poetry Imitates Three Kinds of Men

[1.51] The second species of imitation may be called the material. This species is to be subdivided into three, its objects¹ being three kinds of men, some of whom are morally superior to men in general, some inferior, and some like them. In discussing this second species of imitation Aristotle undertakes to show why poetic matter should be divided into three kinds. (This represents a departure from his usual procedure; for in discussing the first species of imitation he gave no hint of the reason why the medium should be of three kinds, and he will be equally silent on the reason why the modes of imitation should likewise be of three kinds.) Aristotle's intention, then, is to prove that the matter imitated consists of three kinds of persons, those who are better than men in general, or worse, or like them, and having proved this to divide poetry into three species. The persons imitated, he asserts (2. 48a 1-6), "must of

necessity be either good or bad...; whence it follows that they must be better or worse than we or like us." To this view three objections might be raised. The first is that the men whom poetry imitates are not good or bad. This objection is met with the observation that morals are informed either by virtue or by vice and that it is their morals that more than any other factor distinguish men from one another, which is to say that some men are good and some bad. The second objection is that though every man may indeed be either good or bad, a man's moral qualities are not always apparent. To this Aristotle replies that a man's moral qualities inevitably determine his actions and are always apparent in those actions. The third and last objection is that though men's moral qualities are apparent in their actions, the object of poetic imitation is not men in action. To refute this Aristotle lays it down as a self-evident first principle that men in action are the only men imitated by poetry. To forestall objections from some who would think it inappropriate to divide good and bad men into three classes, Aristotle asserts that the same division is made by painters, who, men being either beautiful or ugly, paint figures that are more beautiful than men in general, or uglier, or like them.

12

The Species of Poetry Determined by the Social Station of its Characters

[1.52] The passage quoted in the preceding paragraph plainly reveals that the *Poetics* is no more than an accumulation of notes which Aristotle collected to serve as an aid to his memory when he would later undertake the task of sifting the good from the bad to compose a book that should be well organized and self-consistent throughout. For what our author says there not only is not true but contradicts what he will say later, when, inquiring whether the tragic agent should be better than men in general or worse or like them, he concludes that the person best fitted for tragedy is one who is better than men in general or like them, but does not go on to say that a poem's species is determined by the moral nature of the person it imitates. Therefore the fact that the agent is a person of very great or very little or ordinary virtue must not be taken in any way as a determinant of the species of the poem in which he appears. It will, however, determine whether the tragedy will arouse pity or fear in the souls of the spectators or hearers, an effect better produced by a person of ordinary than of pre-eminent virtue. Nor is it true that poets imitate men in action to reveal their moral qualities, as his words clearly seem to indicate. (Paraphrased, his words are these: "Moral qualities can always be clearly perceived in men engaged in whatever action, and they enable us to

recognize the good among them from the bad.") If that were true, poetry would be first and foremost an imitation of character, of virtues and vices, which, as will be seen hereafter (III.4), Aristotle firmly denies it to be. Poetry is, rather, the imitation of men in action, i.e., the imitation of fictitious but possible actions that resembles a history of memorable events; and its species are determined not by the moral nature, good or bad, of the persons whom the poet chooses to imitate but by their stations in life, by whether they are royal personages, burghers, or peasants.¹ The poet's choice of plots is determined first of all by their suitability to the conditions of these characters; they are simply possible actions that have never happened, and their end is not to enlarge the world's knowledge of the good and bad in human character, but to offer the common people the greatest possible pleasure in their representations of actions never before seen, these being the kind of things that lie within the people's intellectual range and afford them more pleasure than the acquisition of knowledge, be it through considerations of human character, disquisitions on the arts and sciences, or investigations of phenomena that always occur in a uniform manner.

To make our meaning clearer and to understand more fully how the matter imitated determines the species of poetry, we will consider five things common to all men: intellect, will, fortune, rank, and activity.² Two of these, intellect and will, are constituents of his nature; the remaining three are extraneous to it. Each of the five consists of two elements: intellect is the ground of intelligence and stupidity; will of goodness and wickedness; fortune is the cause of happiness and unhappiness; rank may be royal or private; activity philosophical or political. All of these elements, except philosophical activity, are objects of poetic imitation, of that species of it that has been called material. But not all of these nine elements nor any pair of them determines the poem's species. That is determined solely by the social station of the characters, by whether they are royal personages or private citizens; the other elements are introduced merely as accessories to social rank. Only one element of each pair may be attributed to the characters of a given rank, and it may not be chosen haphazardly. If the characters are peasants or plebians they are more appropriately represented as stupid than as intelligent, whereas intelligence is better attributed to royal personages. Tragedy, which represents royal personages, will more appropriately represent them as good than as bad, though it will not exclude all evil traits, and it seems to have a preference for representing them as unhappy rather than happy, though again it does not exclude happiness. And since there are various degrees of happiness and unhappiness, not every degree of either will be appropriate to royal or private persons. Finally, no true poem can be made that does not represent human activity, I mean the kind of activity which we have called political, distinguishing it from the philosophical to indicate that it is unrelated to the arts and sciences, which, as we have already shown, cannot offer legitimate objects of imitation to the poets.

These considerations plainly show that in so far as a poem's species is determined by its matter, it is determined by whether its characters are noble and

royal personages, or humble and private citizens. The nobility or humbleness of a person is not revealed by his virtues or vices, but by his deportment. When informed by decorum a person's deportment reveals that he is a nobleman; when informed by indecorum that he is of low condition. By decorum and indecorum I mean social forms and manners that bear witness not to the goodness or wickedness of the soul of the man in action, but to his high or low social rank, and owe their peculiar quality to the high or low quality of his intellect. The fact is that by giving the terms "better" and "worse" a moral signification Aristotle comes too close to adopting the position of the Stoics, for whom no men are noble but the virtuous and none base but the vicious. But Stoic doctrine is out of place in poetry, which reflects the popular opinion that good and bad men are to be found among both the noble and the base-born. Now the reason why the deportment of nobles should be decorous and that of the humble indecorous is very plain: the nobleman will take infinite pains to avoid manners which being commonly associated with the humble are unworthy of the nobility, in which rank he endeavors with all his powers to maintain himself, whereas the man of low condition follows wherever his appetites may lead him, indifferent to the possibility of being taken for what he is not. There is no doubt, then, that Aristotle's assertions on this subject are neither complete nor true, for a poem's species is not determined by the moral qualities of the persons imitated, though it must be admitted that they play some part in the process.

Unless I am deceived Aristotle was not fully satisfied with what he left written on the page under consideration, which is perhaps the mere beginning of an inquiry into the number of ways in which a man may be said to be better than another; and having begun with virtue and vice, which are the first criteria for judging human superiority and inferiority, he abandoned the inquiry before he had discovered exactly what the terms "better" and "worse" signify when viewed as determinants of the species of poetry.

13

History May Deal with Other than Human Actions

[1.55] Now in view of what Aristotle assumes in the passage we have been discussing and will continue to assume throughout the rest of the *Poetics*, we have no reason for doubting that to him poetry can have only one subject, viz., human actions. If he is right, his opinion seems to lend strong support to those who maintain that history can have no other subject than human actions. For poetry, as we have said and shall repeat, is the image of history,

and if it is the image of history it must be the image of history as a whole, for if it represented only a part of history it could not truly be called its image. Similarly, the image of a face in a mirror must represent the whole face, otherwise we should be constrained to say that it was only part of an image. Therefore if poetry can have no other subject than human actions, the subject of history must likewise be human actions. But we know as a fact that history may concern itself with other subjects also, for Aristotle himself wrote a history of animals, Theophrastus a history of plants, Pliny a natural history, and other authors histories of the same kinds. From this fact we may draw one of two conclusions: that it should be possible for poetry to imitate actions other than human actions or that we should condemn the authors just mentioned for choosing unacceptable subjects for their histories.

To avoid both condemning these writers and conceding that poetry may legitimately imitate other objects than human actions let us divide the subjects of history into three classes. The first consists of phenomena which know no change and which always have and always will be the same for all historians in all ages. Such phenomena are found among both animate and inanimate beings, and the following may be taken as examples: that a certain kind of marble is tender when quarried but hardens when exposed to the air; that there are fruit-bearing trees whose fruits mature only in the summer and others whose fruits mature only in the autumn; that a hare may conceive a second time during pregnancy; that an infant is not viable unless he is born on the seventh or the tenth month after conception.¹ The second class consists of certain actions of inanimate objects or of animate beings lacking reason, actions so rare that they have the appearance of miracles. Examples of them are the action, mentioned in the *Poetics*, of the statue of Mityls, which fell accidentally, but seemed to do so with the intention of killing Mityls' murderer and thus of wreaking vengeance on him; and that of the stallion which had refused to cover his mother and upon discovering that he had been tricked into doing so in the dark was so sorrow-stricken that he killed himself by dashing his head against a rock.² The third class consists of human actions of which Aristotle speaks here and throughout this book. These actions constitute the matter of both history and poetry, with the difference already mentioned, that whereas history deals with things that have already happened, poetry deals with those that have never happened but are within the realm of the possible. And when I say human actions I mean also divine actions, which are also treated by both the historian and the poet, for the common people speak of God and his actions in the same manner that they do of men and the actions of men.

Now poetry cannot and does not deal with the first class of subjects because these phenomena are always the same and never suffer change; they are not proper subjects of imitation, nor do imitations of them give pleasure. Thus Ovid erred in composing a poem on fishes and Oppian in treating the same subject in verse. Nor, likewise, does poetry deal with the second class of subjects, which consists of events that are miraculous rather than natural, and which the poet would have to recount exactly as they happened, in the same

manner as the historian, and so would be prevented from giving proof of his powers of invention and performing his proper function, by which alone he can be judged a poet and purvey the kind of pleasure offered by imitations. Moreover, such subjects could not be treated in the dramatic, but only in the narrative mode, since inanimate objects and animate beings lacking reason cannot be brought upon the stage to perform specified actions at the proper time and place. Since these subjects can be treated only in the narrative mode, poets have rightly refrained from treating them as being mutilated and fragmentary, and have treated only the third class of subjects, which may be treated in the dramatic as well as the narrative mode, and are whole and complete. Such subjects may bring fame to the poet because they offer scope for his powers of invention. They also give pleasure to spectators and auditors for a number of reasons, but chiefly because they are imitations. Our conclusion, then, denies neither that history may rightly treat subjects other than human actions nor that human actions are the only subjects appropriate to poetry....

I4

Analogy with Painting

[1.59] When we read (2. 48a 5-6) that Polygnotus painted men as better than they are and Pauson as worse, while Dionysius painted them as they are, we must not take "better" and "worse" as denoting qualities of the soul, for they are intended to denote qualities of the body, i.e., corporal beauty or ugliness, in the representation of which the art of painting shows its proper capabilities, whether that beauty and that ugliness are or are not greater than the beauty and the ugliness of men of the present age or equal to them. In a later passage Aristotle will say plainly that the best painters keep either in their homes or in their minds a model of perfect beauty which they contemplate when they desire to paint a perfectly beautiful figure.¹ In this passage he seems to assume that they do or ought to do the same for a model of perfect ugliness, which they ought likewise to contemplate when they undertake to paint a perfectly ugly figure. He also assumes that when they do not aim at perfect beauty or perfect ugliness they are content to paint men as they are commonly formed by nature, who never attain that ultimate perfection of beauty or ugliness that is to be seen in the figures produced by the painter's art. In a later passage, again, Aristotle will say that the superior poet should possess an idea of the perfection of virtue, which he must contemplate when he undertakes to imitate, say, a valorous and magnanimous man. In this passage he seems to assume that he must also possess that idea of perfect wickedness, which he may contemplate when he is to imitate some cowardly and pusillanimous wretch. He seems also to say that when he aims at something short of perfec-

tion, the poet contents himself with imitating the good or bad of our age, or ordinary men, none of whom has reached the last limits of goodness or wickedness.

It is to be repeated, however, that the criterion for dividing poetry into species is not the perfect or less than perfect goodness or wickedness of the characters but their social rank: royal personages making for one species of poetry, burghers or ordinary persons another, and peasants for a third. Nor is it true that the poet should possess a mental image of perfect virtue or perfect vice or of average virtue or vice which he must contemplate when composing a good poem. What he needs, in my opinion, is the idea of the best and most delightful story, and his mind must never turn aside from it when he is engaged in composing a poem. To make the poem perfect, and like that idea, he will have to introduce persons of different kinds, sometimes perfectly valiant men, sometimes perfect cowards, and sometimes men who fall between these extremes; otherwise his story will be only slightly probable or slightly marvelous. It is likewise my opinion that though a painter should know the limits beyond which he cannot go in painting the beauty of a woman, being properly informed on the true proportions of the members of the human body viewed both singly and as parts of the whole as well as the properties of single colors and their proper relationship to one another, and though, again, he should know the limits which he must not exceed in painting an ugly woman, yet he will not be more highly praised for painting the ideal figure of a woman beautiful or ugly in the highest degree than for painting either the ideal figure of a woman between these two extremes or the portrait of an actual woman, assuming that she is neither extremely beautiful nor extremely ugly. For the art of painting does not consist in creating a figure beautiful or ugly in the highest degree, but in making one that resembles the real, the living, and the natural.

15

The Modes of Imitation

[1.65] Aristotle's discussion of the third species of poetic imitation (3. 48a 19-29), which proceeds from the manner in which the imitation is produced, in very brief, for Plato had discussed it at length in the third book of his *Republic* (392D-394D). The modes of imitation, he asserts, are three: a narrative mode in which the narrator frequently transforms himself into something else,¹ as Homer does; another narrative mode in which the narrator undergoes no transformation; and the dramatic mode, in which the actors are engaged in a variety of actions. These are the three ways in which poets imitate certain objects with certain media.

It is to be observed, however, that in expounding this subject Aristotle seems

not to have followed the best possible order, for he tells us first that imitations are produced in certain modes and then that the modes of imitation are three in number. If he had followed the correct order he would first have said that there are three modes of imitation and then have proceeded to explain which modes may be used in combination with the media and the objects. In like manner his procedure would have been more methodical if he had discussed the objects of imitation before the media, since every one of the five species of poetry produced by the media is subdivided into three when each medium is employed to imitate each of the three objects. But he chose to discuss the media of imitation before the objects for no reason that I can discover. He obviously had a good reason, however, for reserving the discussion of the modes of imitation to the end, for it seems to be his opinion that each of the three modes of imitation is capable of combining with each of the media and each of the objects. Now since the objects of imitation are three in number, the media five, and the modes three, we may say, considering objects, media, and modes separately, that there are eleven species of imitation. When the objects are combined with the modes, nine more. When the media are combined with the modes, fifteen more. When the objects, the media, and the modes are combined, we have forty-five more. The total number of the species of imitation, then, is ninety-five....

* * * * *

[1.69] The species of imitation are ninety-five in number, if we take Aristotle's words in the sense which they seem to convey. Yet I very much doubt that this is the correct number, for I doubt that each mode may combine with each medium, as I know that it can combine with each object. I cannot imagine, for instance, how it would be possible for a poet to employ the single medium of dancing or the double medium of dancing and music² in a narrative in which the narrator undergoes a transformation or in a poem involving any transformation other than that found in a dramatic imitation. Further, if epic poetry is the only species of poetry that produces its imitation with the single medium of language, it follows, since Pier Vettori³ denies that epic poetry may ever be written in the purely narrative mode and Aristotle that it may ever be written in the dramatic, that not every mode can combine with every medium. This becomes clearer if we agree with Plato's assertion (*Rep.* 3.394B) that the dithyramb, the species of poetry in which language, dancing, and harmony are employed simultaneously, is never found in any mode except the purely narrative (from which assertion we may infer that nomes, too, are always in that mode, since Aristotle offers dithyrambs and nomes as examples of that species of imitation which employs language, dancing, and music simultaneously); and if we also agree with Aristotle himself, who assumes that tragedy and comedy, which make use of the media of language, dancing, and music at different times, are never in any other mode than the dramatic. And so, if we consider all the species of imitation, both the simple and the compound, we shall find that they come not to ninety-five, as we have already

said, but to only fifty-five. Our method of computing is the following. The objects of imitation give us three species of imitation, the media five, the modes three. The objects combined with the media give us fifteen species of imitation and combined with the modes nine. The media with the modes cannot produce more than five species of imitation, if what we said above is true. Finally, the objects, the media, and the modes combined together cannot produce more than fifteen species....

If we take Aristotle's words in the sense which they seem to convey, that all the modes may combine with all the media as they combine with all the objects, we shall find that this number is not the correct one. But we shall perhaps come nearer to his real meaning if we do not take his statement literally but interpret it rationally, in the sense that some, not all, the media of imitation combine only with some, not all, the modes.

* * * * *

[1.72] I am not quite certain whether Aristotle shares the opinion common to all men that there are three modes of imitation, the narrative, the dramatic, and a combination of the two (the mode of Homer's poems), with which last he opens his consideration of the modes, or whether he believes, rather, that the modes of imitation are only two, the narrative and the dramatic, but that the narrative is of two kinds, the perfect and the imperfect. By the "perfect narrative mode" I mean the one in which the poet speaks both in his own person and in another's, for one may speak both ways without transforming himself into some one else; by the "imperfect narrative mode" the one in which the poet speaks only in his own person. The second of these opinions seems to me the more likely to be Aristotle's, and it also conforms more nearly with the truth which we shall ascertain as we continue our discussion of the modes. The perfect narrative mode, then, is the one in which Homer writes, who speaks not only in his own person but in that of his characters. In this Homer is not unique, and if this description of his method were exhaustive Aristotle would have had no reason for singling him out as a model for narrative poets. But Homer does also what other poets fail to do: he tells little in his own person, and that little more as a means of introducing others to speak than for any other purpose. Further, in epic poetry the speaker may be introduced in two other ways, without a transition or with one. When the poet follows the first of these methods, he introduces the speaker not with the expression "So-and-so said" or "So-and-so answered," but with the first letter of his name, as Virgil does in *Eclogue VII* and Cicero in his *De Amicitia*. When he follows the second method, he introduces him with "So-and-so said" or "So-and-so answered," which are clear transitions from the narrator to the speaker or links connecting the two, who in the works by Virgil and Cicero just named are separate and unrelated. This method is invariably Homer's. Why Aristotle prefers poems in which the narrator says little in his own person to those in which he says much he explains clearly in another part of this work, and the reason why he does not praise the method by which the poet introduces

speakers without a transition may be clearly seen if we compare and contrast this method with the other.

16

The Five Kinds of Speakers in Narrative Poems

[1.73] Aristotle says (3. 48a 21–22) that the narrative poet sometimes transforms himself into something else, not some *one* else¹ because the speakers in narrative poems are not always men and women. They may be beings of five kinds: (1) Men and women, to whom, of all animals, speech is natural. (2) Celestial deities and those who, according to the tenets of the various religions, are believed to enjoy eternal glory in Heaven. They are the true God, the elect angels, and the souls of the blest, and also Jupiter and Juno, Apollo, Mercury, and others; earth-deities like fountain- meadow- mountain- and forest-nymphs, fauns, satyrs, and, briefly, all the daemons; sea-deities, like Neptune, Proteus, and others, and Galathea and other sea-nymphs; infernal deities like Pluto, Proserpine, the Furies, and others of their kind, who exist either in torment in the underworld or in peace and bliss in the Elysian fields; to whom we may add the devils and the souls of the damned. All these beings are assigned speaking roles because they are believed by the uneducated to have a human form or because holding, as they do, that their own form is perfect and fashioned in the image of the divine they cannot be brought to believe that the gods and other beings, true or fabulous, whom we have named have a form different from their own. (3) Virtues and vices, which the pagan religion does not convert into personal deities and to which it does not attribute a definite parentage and place of birth as it does to its other gods. They are Envy, Hate, Perseverance, Chastity, and the like, to which may be added social stations like Nobility and Baseness and human conditions like Wealth, Poverty, Glory, Infamy, and the like. To these may be added cities and provinces, all of which are represented as male or female, are attributed human speech, and are thought to partake of the divine nature. (4) Animals and plants, to which poets attribute reason and speech befitting their natures or the circumstances in which they are represented. Aesop can be singled out as one whose animals speak in a manner suited to their natures; many others, on the other hand, frame for them speeches suited to the circumstances in which they are made to appear, among them Petrarch in his charming sonnet (*Canz.* 8), "A piè de' colli ove la bella vesta." Animals should not be assigned speaking roles in drama, though they have been by poets of great authority; for lacking, as we have said, both reason and speech they are not fitted for such roles and must borrow the voices of men. (5) Plants and inanimate objects, like stones, gold, iron, beds, and the like. When poets frame speeches for these

they suit the words to their natures or the circumstances in which they are made to appear, as they do with animals and plants. Catullus² composed a speech for a door without deviating from this principle. The introduction of these objects as speakers in dramatic representations would be no more commendable than that of animals. This, then, is the reason why Aristotle used the neuter rather than the masculine gender in the passage we have been considering....

17

The Modes of Imitation Reconsidered

[1.76] It is now time for me to set forth my own views on the subject under discussion, for I am not satisfied with what has been written by others. Words and things or, better, the images of words and things stored in the memory are manifested in one of three ways: with words alone in place of both words and things, with words and things in place of words and things, and with words and things resembling (not reproducing) words and things. The first of these modes is called the narrative, the second the dramatic, and the third the similitudinary.¹ Plato and Aristotle seem not to have recognized the third of these modes but only the first two, holding that a third mode, of which they gave the *Iliad* as the example, was formed by the combination of the narrative mode and the dramatic. It is my opinion, however, that the dramatic mode is not to be found in the *Iliad* either in its pure state or in combination with another; its mode is, rather, the similitudinary, though not in its pure state but in combination with the narrative. The similitudinary mode, as we have said, was not recognized by either of those two very great men or by others who have considered the matter since their day. The result has been two errors: the similitudinary mode has never been recognized and the dramatic mode has been seen in the *Iliad*, where it is not to be found.

Let us now devote a few words to distinguishing these three modes from one another. The narrative mode uses words alone to manifest both the words and the things stored up in the memory; and since words are its only medium it may be compared, as we have already said, to what in painting are known as monochromes. (It is my opinion that painting of this kind was invented to represent marble sculptures, but its use was later extended to represent objects of all kinds.) We must bear in mind, however, that there are three ways of representing and manifesting words that have been entrusted to the memory: the indirect and two others which together form the direct. In the first of the direct methods the words are spoken by a person representing another person, in the second they are spoken by the narrator himself. The indirect method is proper to the narrative mode, as was clearly recognized by Trogus Pompeius,

who as Justin attests in his *Epitome* (38. 3. 11) reprehends both Livy and Sallust for introducing in their historical narratives what they would have us believe are verbatim reports of the speeches of historical personages. The direct method in which a person is represented in place of another is well suited only to the dramatic mode, just as the direct method in which the author speaks in his own person is well suited only to the similitudinary mode. On the other hand, the use of the direct method by Livy and Sallust was perhaps unjustly condemned by Trogus Pompeius, if he condemned it only because the method proper to the narrative mode is the indirect; for direct quotation as practiced by Livy and Sallust is, in my opinion, similitudinary and dramatic, and therefore may have a place in narrative. What makes the practice of these historians reprehensible is that their inventions are devoid of truth, a defect that mars nothing less than the essence of history; for the persons quoted never spoke words like those attributed to them, and even if they did, it is neither true or probable that anyone could have memorized them as they were spoken or have stored their sense so securely in his memory that the historian could at a later date have used the reporter's version of the speech as a faithful record of the original. The narrative mode, then, represents both words and things by means of words only, that is to say, it represents things by means of words and words by means of words either in the indirect manner or in the similitudinary-direct (never in the dramatic-direct, since writers in the narrative mode always speak in their own persons).

And as the authors of narratives may be divided into two kinds, the impartial, like the historians who aspire to be good historians, and the partial, like those who are passionately involved in the things they relate, so poems in the narrative mode may also be divided into the partial and the impartial. I call a narrative poem impartial when it refrains from judging or praising or blaming any part of its action, recognizing dispassionate judgments and partisan passions to be the prerogatives of those by whom the poem is heard. The author of such a poem never loses the confidence or provokes the suspicions of his audience, whereas one who cannot refrain from judging and praising and blaming nor from making parts of the action occasions for lectures on politics or other subjects betrays a mind swayed by partisan passions and thereby diminishes the reader's confidence in his absolute veracity. In this respect Homer is to be highly commended, for when speaking in his own person he resists every temptation to say anything that might call his veracity into question. Virgil, on the other hand, occasionally failed to guard himself sufficiently against assuming the role of judge, and that failure is more frequently met in Lucan and others, who must not on that account be held in higher esteem as narrative poets. Partial narratives are narratives in which the poet does what we insist the historian must avoid doing. Narratives of this sort are for writers who are personally involved in the things they relate. This involvement is proper mostly to poetry in the dramatic and similitudinary modes; dispassionateness and impartiality are proper mostly to purely narrative poetry.

The narrative mode may be distinguished into two more kinds: the general-

ized and the particularized. Generalized narrative concerns itself with species or with wholes; particularized narrative with individuals or with parts.² Virgil's *Aeneid* is an example of generalized narrative; Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of the particularized. The qualities peculiar to generalized narrative are grandeur and magnificence, and any faults of execution that may mar it are not easily discernible. The qualities of particularized narrative, on the other hand, are humility and lowliness, and such faults of execution as mar it are easily discerned even when they are very slight. Generalized narrative may be compared to small and indistinct paintings, in which flaws are not easily detected, and particularized narrative to paintings that are larger than life and distinct, so that every least flaw in them is clearly discernible. Hence inferior painters who recognize their numerous deficiencies cannot bring themselves to produce any but paintings crowded with small, indistinct figures, whereas great painters with confidence in their abilities demonstrate their true worth by painting, as Michelangelo did, figures larger than life, though they know how prominently every least defect in them will stand out. For this reason Homer, who was conscious of his true worth, wrote mostly particularized narrative to give proof of his superhuman genius, producing works in which his errors, if any had been made, could not be concealed. Virgil, on the contrary, did all in his power to avoid particularized narrative, taking cover behind the generalized, which requires less labor and has the appearance of something very great and magnificent, for he knew that if he wrote particularized narrative he would never achieve magnificence or keep his work clear of numerous blemishes. In this, then, as in other respects Homer is Virgil's superior. How a narrative may be particularized and achieve magnificence will be discussed hereafter.

The dramatic mode, which, as we have said, represents things with things and words with direct words, differs from the narrative mode in a number of ways. (1) It represents words and things with words and things, whereas the narrative mode represents things with words only and represents direct utterances with indirect. (2) It is more restricted in space, for it cannot represent places remote from one another, as the narrative mode may do, which in this respect need observe no restrictions of any kind. (3) It is more restricted in time, for, unlike the narrative mode, it cannot represent actions that unfold over different periods of time. (4) It may represent only things visible and audible, whereas the narrative deals with both the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible. (5) It stirs the emotions more effectively than the narrative. (6) The narrative mode is able to give a better and fuller account of things, even of those peculiarly apt to stir the emotions, for owing to the difficulty of representing actions in a lifelike manner, murders and other such actions, which are difficult to represent with dignity, are never represented on the stage but are more fittingly made to occur behind the scenes and are then reported by a messenger. (7) The narrative mode can relate in a few hours the occurrences of many hours, and in many the occurrences of a few, whereas the dramatic mode represents actions in the time in which they would naturally occur and can neither spread a few actions over many hours nor crowd many

actions into a few. Hence the performances of tragedies and comedies, which are species of dramatic poetry, must not last so long as to cause hardship to the audience, nor must a play represent more actions than those that could have filled the space of time it is made to cover, the dramatist being, as we have said, under constraint to have due regard for the physical needs of the people, who after a certain number of hours must leave the theatre to attend to the human need for food, drink, sleep, etc. (8) The narrative mode treats things that have actually happened and those that have not happened but are within the realm of the possible, whereas the dramatic mode represents only imaginary things that may happen. This restriction is due not to its inability to represent actual happenings but to the tradition which has come down to us from the ancients, who seem not to have employed the dramatic mode for any stories except those of the poet's own invention. Hence the custom prevalent in some localities of representing the Passion of Our Lord or other histories dramatically is in violation of this tradition.

The dramatic mode differs from the similitudinary as the metaphor from the simile. In the metaphor the proper word for a thing is replaced by a word of different meaning; in a drama one person is made to represent another and is accepted by the audience as a person whom he or she represents. The simile, on the other hand, uses the word of different meaning not in place of the proper word but only in so far as it is similar to it and yet recognizably different, just as a poem in the similitudinary mode uses words and things not as substitutes for the words and things imitated but only as words and things that are like them and yet recognizably different. If Marc Antony, for example, addressing the populace after Caesar's death, had turned his own dagger towards his breast with the words, "Thus did Cassius to Caesar as he cried, 'Usurper of liberty, thou art dead!' " no one in the crowd but would have recognized Antony as Antony, his dagger as his own dagger, and his words likewise as his own words; yet thanks to Antony, his dagger, and his words, everyone would have understood what Cassius said and did at Caesar's death, i.e., everyone by means of the similes would have apprehended the historical fact. What is more, the similitudinary mode differs from the narrative and the dramatic in that it cannot rightly have an independent existence, but in so far as it quotes some one's words directly must be dependent on the narrative mode since it cannot dispense with the narrator, who is known to be so-and-so and different from the one whom he temporarily impersonates as he delivers the similitudinary utterance. On the other hand we are obliged to admit that in so far as the similitudinary mode consists of words represented directly it is sometimes found by itself and apart from a supporting narrative. Examples of it may be found in Ovid's *Heroides*, a series of letters written under the name of famous women of antiquity, and in many epigrams which contain, for instance, such words as Andromache might have spoken over the body of Hector. These letters and epigrams, in which the poet does not speak in his own person, should not be classed as dramatic poems, for they are not designed for recitation by women on the stage and for the pleasure of an audience, the simple words being unaccompanied by an action unfolding before

curious eyes. For this reason though we judge their mode to be similitudinary we are obliged to add that they are not perfect specimens of their kind, for in them the narrator remains hidden, and without him they cannot have a legitimate claim to being classified as similitudinary. In like manner the combination of the narrative and the dramatic modes in Cicero's *De Amicitia*, in some of Plato's dialogues, and in other works by other authors violates the nature of both modes.

We may conclude, then, that the manners of representing spoken words are seven in number, three of them simple and four compound, three of the latter four being composed of two modes and one of three. They are: simple narrative, simple dramatic, simple similitudinary; narrative and dramatic combined, narrative and similitudinary combined, dramatic and similitudinary combined; narrative, dramatic, and similitudinary combined.

Part II

The Origin of Poetry in General and of its Species

I

The Inventors of Poetry

[1.90] Aristotle has it (4. 48b 20–24) that the first poetic inventions were produced by men who possessed by nature a stronger bent for imitation and music than others and that they developed their art not by making it the subject of subtle and profound speculations¹ but “by versifying spontaneously,”² never pausing to think of what they were about to say. That such men were the first poets becomes clear if we recall something said in the first pages of the *Poetics*. For if, as it was then said, poetry is imitation and its proper medium is metrical language, it follows that poetry was first composed by men with a bent for imitation and rhythmical language and that the first poets were men with a stronger bent for them than their fellows. We must also bear in mind that, as Aristotle holds, “metre partakes of music and harmony,”³ otherwise it would not be metre. But if imitation and music are natural to men, it follows that the first efforts to produce poetry were not strictly controlled by art, but were natural and spontaneous, subject only to the promptings of the poet’s native genius. There are some, however, who might deny that imitation is natural to all men. Aristotle refutes them (4. 48b 4–22) with the four following arguments. (1) That is natural to men which is implanted in them and is found in them from childhood. Imitation is found in men from childhood. Therefore it is clearly natural to men. (2) That is natural to men for which they have a greater aptitude than the other animals. Man has a greater aptitude for imitation than any other animal. Therefore imitation is natural to men. (3) That is natural to men which they use from the first as a means wherewith to achieve certain ends. Men use imitation in their first years as a means of acquiring all their knowledge. Therefore imitation is natural to men. (4) That is natural to men from which all men derive pleasure. All men derive pleasure from imitations. Therefore imitation is natural to men. Since no one doubts that harmony is natural to men, Aristotle does not pause to prove his assertion but assumes it to be self-evident and universally acceptable. The instincts for imitation and harmony being natural to men, Aristotle concludes (1) that the first poets were the men in whom these instincts were strongest and (2) that they exercised their art without first making it the object of deep and prolonged thought....

2

Poetry and Madness

[1.91] Aristotle makes it clear that he does not regard poetry as a special gift of God, vouchsafed to one man rather than to another, as are prophecy and other similar gifts, which are neither natural nor shared by all mortals. In fact by insisting that imitation and music are "natural" to men (4. 48b 5) he doubtless means to condemn, though he does not do so openly, the opinion which some attribute to Plato, that poetry is infused in men through divine madness. This opinion owes its origin to the ignorance of the common people and has been fostered and favored by the vaingloriousness of the poets for the following reasons and in the following manner. A thing made by another is remarkable and wonderful to all who feel that it is beyond their own powers to produce; and since men commonly measure the powers of other men's minds and bodies by their own, they regard as a miracle and a special gift of God a work made by another which they recognize as beyond their own natural abilities to produce. This explains how the ignorant came to believe that the first poets were imbued with the divine spirit and enjoyed God's unfailing help and how, believing this, they came to marvel exceedingly at the plots which the poets invented as well as at the succession of verses with which they made them visible and audible, their wonder being all the greater because they knew that Apollo's oracles were delivered in verse of the same kind, the kind in which, as they believed, the gods held converse with one another. And being unable to imagine themselves inventing fictions as like the truth and as delightful as those which they admired and, even if they managed to invent one, of reducing it to verse, and especially such admirable verse, they believed that those achievements could never have come within the reach of the poets by purely human means. Again, considering as divine gifts and heavenly things all objects of delight—for instance, the rare beauty of a woman—whose existence they cannot ascribe to evident causes, these same men came to believe that poetry was infused into poets as a special gift from on high, for as they listened to it they were rendered powerless to probe into its causes by its surpassing sweetness. This popular belief, though false, the poets found pleasing because it made them the objects of high praise and won them esteem as darlings of the gods. And so they fostered it with their assent, and pretending that it was true began to open their poems with invocations to Apollo and the Muses, thus implying that they spoke with the very tongues of those divinities. In doing this, however, they followed the common practice of wise men, who, when beginning a work that transcends or seems to transcend the limits of human faculties, or is merely difficult, invoke the aid of the divine benevolence with humble prayers.

The opinion, then, that poets are imbued with divine madness must not be attributed to Plato, for as I have said it originated in the minds of the common people and won the assent of poets because it redounds to their advan-

tage. Plato does, to be sure, speak of divine madness, but there is no doubt that he does so playfully, as he habitually does when speaking of such matters. In the *Phaedrus* (244A-245A), for instance, he asserts in the person of Socrates that the lover is possessed by madness; but being bent upon proving that that madness is no evil thing, he adds that there is also a good kind of madness, the kind that possesses the prophetesses at Delphi, the priests of Dodona, the Sibyl and other diviners, and the poets.¹ In saying this it is not his intention to prove that poets are in any way possessed by divine madness; he mentions poetic madness as one example of the kind he is extolling only because it was generally believed in by his contemporaries. The playfulness is much more evident in the *Ion* (534D), where a single example is cited to prove that poets compose in a state of madness. The example is that of Tynnichus the Chalcidian, who never composed a memorable poem until, by his own testimony, he brought forth the very beautiful paean in praise of Apollo under the inspiration of the Muses. Here Plato would have us accept at face value a declaration that redounds to its author's glory and believe in addition that because Tynnichus, who alone in the course of many centuries produced one very beautiful poem without effort, all other poets in all ages composed theirs by allowing their tongues to be moved and their pens to be guided by the divine afflatus! He is playful, finally, in the *Apology* of Socrates (22B-C), where it is affirmed that poets do not understand the poems they produce in the throes of madness; for if he really believed that poets were divinely inspired, why would he have excluded them from his republic?...

* * * * *

[1.482] Aristotle now tells how a poet should go about representing a character under the sway of some passion....² A poet, he asserts (17. 55a 29-32), who would successfully represent a character in the throes of wrath, sorrow, love, or other passion should transform himself into that character by willing himself into a wrathful, sorrowing, amatory, or other state. For if a person who actually feels wrath, sorrow, love, etc. speaks and acts spontaneously, i.e., without recourse to any art, in a manner conforming to his inner state, and succeeds in moving others, so a poet who has transformed himself into such a person will represent him appropriately without recourse to any other art and his representation will succeed in moving others. When asked by Bonagiunta Orbicciani of Lucca by what path he had attained the summit of love poetry, a height never attained by Bonagiunta himself or any other poet before Dante's time, Dante replies (*Purg.* 24. 49ff.) that he had followed no other path than this, to write love poetry only under the stimulus of love and to say only as much as did not exceed the measure of that love. Petrarch, as we may read in his Latin writings,³ had truly known love, and it is therefore no cause for wonder that he could sing of that passion in such beautiful verse. Cicero (in the person of Antonius) seems to counsel (*De Or.* 2. 45ff.) any who would become perfect orators and acquire the power to stir a judge's emotions to follow Aristotle's teaching. The same counsel is offered as new by Quin-

tilian (*Inst. Or.* 6. 2. 25ff.), perhaps forgetting that it was old and had already been offered by Cicero; nor would Horace (*Ars Poet.* 101ff.), it would seem, have the poet follow any other course to move his readers.

Now I am not certain that for all its endorsement by so many worthy men this teaching is so useful as to be indispensable, for the fact is that poets must strive for appropriateness not only when the objects of their representations are persons under the sway of passion but when they are other persons as well or when they are actions rather than persons; and since everyone can study and judge the actions and passions of others much better than his own, the poet does not find the appropriate model of the emotion he seeks in what he is able to observe within himself or to learn from his past experience but rather in what is to be commonly observed in persons of the type he is representing, taking due account of a variety of circumstances, especially those of time and place. And because these matters yield their secrets only to the efforts of subtle minds and penetrating judgments, we must not restrict our study to a single action or a single person under the sway of some passion, and much less to a single action or passion of our own; we must extend it, rather, to many persons and many of their actions so that we may put ourselves in position to select from them the one that will best serve our purpose. This we could never do if each of us studied only his own passions, both because no one can observe his own passions as accurately as another's and because our own would all take their form from our peculiar nature. Thus, for example, the expression of wonder on the countenances of the Apostles in Giotto's mosaic of Christ Walking on the Jordan in the portico of St. Peter's in Rome is not identical in each and every one of them but differs from one Apostle to the other, an achievement that would have been, and indeed could not but have been, beyond Giotto's reach if he had restricted himself to the consideration of the peculiar wonder of which he himself was capable.⁴

To this I would add that I cannot tell whether it is possible for any man to pass from one emotional state to its opposite at will, to pass, that is, from a state of placidity to one of wrath, and so on to states of joy, grief, wonder, etc. from their opposite states, since our souls cannot be forced to feel any emotion by the action of the will, but must await the action of pleasing, displeasing, painful, and other such stimuli from outside ourselves. It is true that a person under the sway of a real emotion will move another to the same emotion when he expresses it in ways suited to producing that effect. (I qualify my statement because children express their feelings in one way, women in another, virile men in a third, and others in other ways.) Whether it is true, as he has written, that when he composed his love poems Dante followed no other path and used no other art to reach the summit than that of awaiting the promptings of love and writing down no more than love dictated I do not know, but I do not believe it, for I know that many men endowed with minds that could never be described as dull have composed poems under the stimulus of love that are not only less than perfect but of no account whatever. In any case it is a verifiable fact that Dante filled his poems with more than the inspirations of love; as he himself has told us in his *Convivio* (1. 1. 10) they

are filled with lofty and noble sentiments drawn from worthy writers. Nor will the evidence permit us to doubt that Petrarch succeeded in making his love poems as beautiful as they are by fixing his mind on almost anything but himself and his love, so much so that, as I have already observed (III.5d; 1.288), he is sometimes to be condemned as a thief rather than be commended as a poet. I do not deny that if an orator's words are not accompanied by suitable bodily expressions they will lack vigor and warmth and that nothing will more surely produce the outward signs of a passion than a truly felt one; but even after that admission has been made I must insist that there are persons like Roscius, Paris, and others who won the admiration and praise of the ancients who can give suitable bodily expression to a passion they do not feel. Such simulations are components of the spectacle and no concern of the poet....

* * * * *

[I.486] Aristotle has established it as fact that a poet who has successfully transformed himself into a person swayed by a passion will successfully represent a character in that state, i.e., he will succeed in inventing, even without the aid of art, the kinds of things suitably said and done by such a character. This, however, is not possible to everyone, but only to persons of superior intellectual capacities.⁵ But there is a second avenue to the adequate representation of impassioned persons, and that is a diligent study of what persons in a given emotional state say and do. This too is possible only to persons of superior intellectual capacities. From this it follows that poetic invention and the exercise of the art of poetry is properly for persons of superior intellectual capacities and not, as some have said, for madmen;⁶ for no madman can in the nature of things feel a variety of emotions or be an accurate observer of what others normally say and do in various emotional states. But in my opinion the text under consideration (17. 55a 32–34) is corrupt, and for ἢ μανικοῦ ("or a madman") we should read οὐ μανικοῦ ("not a madman"). That the οὐ was changed to ἢ need not surprise us, for the reading could not have been left as they found it by scribes who had swallowed whole the idea of poetic madness, a fabrication implanted in men's minds in the manner already described and here exposed for what it is by Aristotle's argument. We might, to be sure, retain the reading in the received text without greatly altering the interpretation of it; we might, that is, take ἢ in the sense of μάλλον ἢ ("rather than"), as we do in Homer's line (*Il.* 1. 117), "I would that your host should live *rather than* perish." If we did, the sense would be, "Poetry is for the person of superior intellectual capacities *rather than* for the madman." This sense of ἢ, however, seems to be more suitable to verse than to prose, and for this reason I believe that we shall have the correct reading only if we emend the text. It is also to be noted that though Aristotle's present teaching applies only to his discussion of character, yet as if assuming that it were applicable also to plot and thought he asserts that the art of poetry in general and not simply that part of it that concerns itself with character "is for the intellectually gifted and not for madmen; for of the former some are capable of every

kind of transformation and the rest of observing others" — that is to say, some can produce faithful representations by the exercise of their own powers and the rest only by the observation of other men.

This teaching of Aristotle's is to be rejected for the reason that the art of poetry is already in being. For if the art is complete and its principles are sound, it is sufficient to teach us how to fashion every part of a poem, and we need not transform ourselves into other persons or to observe other persons' actions. It is enough that we apply the teachings of the art, otherwise we shall needlessly and unprofitably combine two distinct activities, following the teachings of the art and engaging in direct "imitation," (that being the usual name for what we call "resemblance"), as we shall perhaps show elsewhere when we discuss the objects of this imitation at length.⁷

3

Two Kinds of Poets

[1.93] Just as, according to Hesiod (*Works and Days* 293ff.), there are two classes of men, those wise enough to find their own way in life and those who must rely upon the counsel of others (we need not take into account those who can do neither), so there are two classes of artificers, those wise enough to discover the necessary principles of their art for themselves and by their precept and example to offer guidance to their fellows, and those who are unable to discover a single principle of the art they practice but can only follow the precepts and examples of others. This is especially true of poets, some of whom take no notice of other poets, but invent their own matter and their own modes of figurative speech, while the rest cannot turn their backs on matter previously invented by others or on the figures of speech already used by them. Petrarch (*Epist. de rebus fam.* 1. 7) speaks of these two classes of poets in a letter to his friend Tomaso da Messina, saying from humility or other cause that he himself was a poet of the second kind. I am of the opinion that poets of this latter kind must never for a moment be tolerated for reasons which we will offer time and again as we proceed with our exposition of Aristotle's work. Petrarch, however, is of different opinion. These poets, he believes, are not only to be tolerated but to be commended, though much less than the others; and to lend validity to his opinion he compares the poets of the first kind to the silk worm, which draws the silk out of its own viscera, and those of the second to the bee, which does its peculiar work by gathering nectar and wax here and there among the flowers. I must repeat, however, that I am unable to applaud these poets, who seem to me to resemble children and the duller sort of men, who ape the actions of others and acquire knowledge not by the exercise of their reason but mechanically, by imitation and practice.

4

Poets Not Imitators in Aristotle's Sense

[1.94] These few words of mine lead to several conclusions quite at variance with Aristotle's opinions. The first is that imitation as Aristotle understands it is not one of the causes of poetry, for the imitation he has in mind here is the kind that functions without the exercise of the reason, in the instinctive manner common to all men from childhood, the imitation through which things are done thus and so because that is the way they are done today or were done in days past. But a poet cannot legitimately fashion a plot that merely reproduces that of another poet, and if he does the resulting work would be not a poem but a history or a piece of stolen property. A poet, for instance, who would fashion a plot out of Orestes' murder of his mother could not legitimately represent Orestes' manner of killing her by taking his particulars from the history of an actual matricide or any one of the three matricides in Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles; but ignoring all matricides of which history or poetry tells must, like each of the poets just named, hone all the powers of his genius and employ it to invent¹ a variant of the story unlike any already received orally or in writing. Nor can he, in telling it, appropriate metaphors and other figures of speech from others, for if he did his reputation would be that of a thief or a person of no account. This first conclusion gives rise to a second, that the kind of imitation required by poetry is not natural to man. This second in its turn gives rise to a third, that the first poetry was not produced spontaneously and without premeditation, as the following considerations will make plain. If plots could be invented and reduced to verse naturally and without effort no one would look on poetry as an object of wonder or hold it in the esteem in which it is currently being held even though the making of it would not be fully within the power of every man, for to us it is not at all wonderful that others should have the ability to make things that we too can design and execute though not in every respect as well as they. Nor could the poets have succeeded in implanting in the heads of the common people the fancy that they owe to infusions of divine madness both the invention of their marvelous matter and the new modes of versification in which it is embodied, things which by those who have neither the theory nor the practice of them are thought to be beyond human reach or at least beyond the reach of all but men who enjoy God's special help. I therefore find it difficult to believe with Aristotle that the first poetry was spontaneous or unpremeditated, for nothing can be produced spontaneously but by those who have had long practice of the necessary art and have formed the habit of it. Hence the first poets could not possibly have produced verses spontaneously, just as one unpracticed in the art of oratory cannot possibly possess the facility to extemporize creditably and at length before an audience. (Extemporaneous oratory, we may add in passing, has been treated briefly by both Cicero [*De Or.* 1. 33ff.] and Quintilian [*Inst. Or.* 10. 7].) And if Aristotle were giving a

true account of the matter it would be impossible to explain why the gift of improvising verses should have made Antipater of Sidon and Licinius Archias so famous that they have come down in history as masters of a rare art.² We may therefore conclude that the imitation which is natural to men is one thing and the imitation required by poetry another. For the imitation which is natural to men and is implanted in them from childhood, the imitation through which they acquire their first knowledge, for which they all have a stronger aptitude than the other animals, and in the exercise of which they consequently take pleasure — such imitation consists in nothing but in copying models supplied by others and doing exactly as they do without knowing why. But the imitation required by poetry not only does not copy models set before it or duplicate something already made without knowing why it has been so made, but rather makes a thing in every way distinguishable from any made before that day and, so to speak, creates a model for others to copy. To do this the poet should know perfectly the reason why he does what he does and should devote time and thought to discovering the subtlest reasons for the procedures he is called upon to follow. So true is this that it can be affirmed in all confidence that the imitation peculiar to poetry is not truly and properly imitation, and should not and cannot rightly be given that name, but is and should and may be called a contest between the poet and the dispositions of fortune or the course of human events to determine which will invent the complex of human actions that in the hearing will be judged to be the more marvelous and the more abundant source of pleasure.

5

Native Genius and Art

[1.96] Our concern at this point being poetry in so far as it has proceeded from the poet's nature, it will perhaps be well for us to make a few comments on the question raised by Horace in the *Ars Poetica* (408ff.), whether poetic production profits more from nature or from art. Horace, to put it briefly, cannot provide an answer; he believes that nature is ineffectual without art and art without nature. The same question is raised after him by Quintilian (*Inst.* (I. 2. 19) in connection with oratory, and he gives the same answer as Horace. Now Horace and Quintilian both speak ineptly of a matter they understand but little; for art is not a different thing from nature and cannot range beyond the bounds of nature, and the thing it sets out to do is precisely the thing done by nature. For that light of doctrine which is distributed here and there as a natural gift¹ and appears in different men in different times and places is gathered together and reduced to order by art and is then made known and taught with ease in a short space of time to men of ordinary intellectual en-

dowments who are capable of rational discourse.² Neither the whole nor a good part of that light is ever found as the natural endowment of any one man. Therefore if we would provide the correct answer to Horace's question and to others like it, we may set on the one side the most perfect nature that can possibly exist in its fulness in one man and on the other the most perfect art that can possibly exist in its fulness in a second man endowed with a nature such as to have enabled him to comprehend his art. If we then inquire which of these two men will produce the better poetry or the better oratory, the rational answer will be that the far better poetry or oratory will be produced by the one with a perfect comprehension of his art, not by the one endowed with a perfect nature. And this will be so not because art can surpass the perfection of nature and teach more than nature, but because it is easier to teach the whole of an art to a man not wholly impenetrable to ideas³ than to find one endowed with all the gifts of nature, which are never allotted to one man but are distributed among many. And so because art can offer more doctrines to the single poet or orator than his nature and those doctrines can be taught with ease to many, art is of greater profit than nature to both the poet and the orator....⁴

6

Imitation as a Source of Pleasure

[1.98] Aristotle holds (4. 48b 8-12) that all human beings, children and adults, the ignorant and the educated, take pleasure in imitations executed by themselves and others. This opinion he supports with the following argument. When actually seen, animals like snakes and toads and things like carrion excite in us no feelings but of displeasure and abhorrence; yet a likeness of them will give us the more pleasure the more skilfully it is executed and consequently the more faithfully it reproduces its original. Imitations, therefore, give pleasure to all. But that is perhaps not always true, for the imitation sometimes represents the whole of its object and sometimes only a part of it. If it represents the whole of something displeasing and abhorrent to us, it too will be displeasing and abhorrent; if it excludes from it all that displeases us, it will of course not fail to give us pleasure. This explains why we take pleasure in the paintings of snakes, toads, and carrion. Imitations of them reproduce only the forms and colors of their originals and consequently none of their venom and stench, and they also eliminate all their corruption and harmfulness, which are the causes of our abhorrence of them and of other animals and things of similar kinds. Now what Aristotle takes as an evident truth, namely, that all men take delight in imitations, whether produced by themselves or others, is in reality no truth at all, for a person's spirits are op-

pressed when he chances upon a painting or sculpture or other work of imitation which either reproduces or somehow recalls to mind some infamous deed from which he himself or his friends have suffered, just as a person of chaste habits will blush with shame when the memory of some lascivious act is revived in him when he chances upon a pictorial representation of it. I say nothing about other unpleasant feelings that may be aroused by imitations, like the feeling of boredom in the presence of imitations too easy to produce, of contempt for poor imitations, and of envy for highly successful ones.

* * * * *

[1.99] Aristotle maintains (4. 48b 12-19) that the reason why all men take pleasure in imitations is that "learning is very delightful not only to philosophers but to others as well," though the ignorant learn less than philosophers and find less pleasure in the process. But since it is impossible to recognize any imitation without thereby acquiring some knowledge, it follows that every imitation, in so far as it is an imitation and is recognized as such, gives pleasure to all who recognize its subject; for what Aristotle means, in my opinion, is that the intellectual process of observing similarities and dissimilarities between different objects is the means whereby we know or itself constitutes the knowing of what an object is. This intellectual process is highly pleasurable to all men, for it is proper to man and is not shared by any other animal. It is also the necessary prelude to the recognition of an imitation; for if I recognize a painted figure as the portrait of an individual known to me, I succeed in doing so because I have made a mental comparison between the lineaments, the colors, the stature, and other like features of the portrait and those of its original, and with this process of comparing and learning as a means I arrive at the knowledge that this is he, that is, that this painting was made as the portrait, the imitation, of the individual in question. If I had never seen the original of the portrait, I could never have perceived the many similarities between portrait and sitter, and could never have made the recognition or have known the pleasure peculiar to the recognition of imitations. Now since the ignorant are so dull of mind that they cannot go as far as philosophers in finding and recognizing the similarities and dissimilarities between different objects, finding and recognizing only those that are more than evident, whereas philosophers also search out and discover the most recondite, it follows that the ignorant do not learn as much as philosophers nor derive as much pleasure from learning as they.

Now I am not denying that the reason given by Aristotle for the pleasure which men find in imitations is true. What I deny is that it is the only one, for there are others that he should not have ignored. One of these is that man derives pleasure from the knowledge that he is able to imitate the actions of his own species and that in this respect he is not inferior to the other animals, which instinctively imitate the actions of their own. Another is that he takes great pleasure in imitating the actions of other animals, and especially those which seem peculiar to some one species of them, as swimming is to fish.

Still another is that he takes a pleasure no less great in imitating the actions of nature or of fortune or the course of earthly affairs by means of such arts as painting, sculpture, music, poetry, and the like; for his imitations seem to him to constitute a new order of nature or of fortune or a new course of earthly affairs and to partake somehow of creations transcending human capabilities. And in addition to these pleasures, all of which have their cause in pride, he enjoys others which have their cause in utility. For an imitation may teach one things that one has never known. Thus one who has never had occasion to see an elephant owing to the remoteness of its natural habitat may come to know its form from a painting of it. Again an imitation may teach painlessly what one could never learn from its original, even though one had occasion to see it. Thus many who wish to learn the art of healing but cannot endure the sight of amputated members of the human body will study a painting of them with pleasure and derive useful knowledge from it. Such profit may also be derived from paintings of snakes, toads, and other loathesome creatures; for they will either teach one what he once knew and has forgotten or refresh his memory of it and thus keep him from forgetting what he already knows.

7

*Poetry and Painting Do Not Yield
the Same Pleasure*

[1.100] Aristotle identifies the pleasure derived from poetic imitation by comparing it to the pleasure from the imitation of the painters. It is well to note, however, that the analogy is not the best possible, since painting gives small pleasure where poetry alone can give the greatest pleasure, and where painting gives the greatest pleasure, poetry not only gives no pleasure, but is positively displeasing. For painting is of two kinds, depending on the kind of object it imitates, which may be the actual, say an individual like Philip of Austria, King of Spain, or the imaginary, say a generalized man who could never be mistaken for a known individual. Now the portrait of an actual person like Philip of Austria gives much more pleasure than one of an imaginary person. The reason for this is evident: it requires less labor and skill to paint the portrait of an imaginary than one of an actual person. Moreover, the painter who portrays an actual man may be taken to task for every slight difference between the portrait and its original and may thus be condemned as a poor artist, whereas the painter of an imaginary person cannot be so condemned, since his picture can have no defect so great that it may not be excused on the ground that there are great variations in the appearance of human beings

and that the portrait need only be true to possible human models. This is why the one painting gives more pleasure than the other, and not, as Leon Battista Alberti argues, because the portrait of the actual person is taken from nature and the other is not, for both of them are or at least may be taken from nature.¹

Poetry, like painting, is also divisible into two kinds, one of which imitates a definite and well-known event like, say, the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, a particular war that was actually fought, and the other an event known only in summary form, like the coming of Aeneas from Troy to Italy. When poetry imitates a particular historical event that is fully known it not only gives us no pleasure but is actually displeasing, so much so that it is made to renounce even the name of poetry. This is the reason why Lucan, Silius Italicus, and some others have become objects of the world's censure and have been removed from the ranks of the poets. But if poetry imitates a history unknown in all its details it will give us immense pleasure. The reason for that is equally evident. When imitating a particular history known in great detail the poet shirks all labor and his genius never exerts itself to invent any part of the matter, for all of it has been set before him by the course of earthly affairs. But when his subject is a history about which very little is known, the poet must refine and sharpen all his intellectual powers and apply them to the invention of all or the greater part of his matter. It is because he followed this latter course that Virgil is commended and admired. Pictorial imitation, then, and poetic imitation not only are not alike and produce unlike effects but are contraries producing contrary effects; for we judge painting by its imitation of the externals that strike the eye through the colors and poetry by its imitation of the inner things (character, thought, etc.) that reveal themselves to the intellect through the actions that it gathers together into a single whole.

I will not refrain from adding that to prove that all men find pleasure in imitation Aristotle did not rest content with merely pointing out the analogy with painting but went on to offer the observation that imitation in painting, and consequently in every other art, gives pleasure because it enables us to learn how a certain figure is the portrait of a certain man, so that with the portrait as a means we come to know its original. It must be borne in mind, however, that the means at our disposal for knowing something must always be better known than the thing that we seek to know. If, for instance, I desired to prove and thus to teach some one that two doctors in the same university, teaching the same subject and drawing the same salary, but each fancying himself superior to the other, will not live together in harmony, I should do so by invoking the familiar example of two cocks of equal strength which cannot live at peace in the same poultry yard because each fancies himself stronger than the other. Aristotle's method, on the contrary, is to offer us the portrait as a means of recognizing the original. To do this, however, is to offer the less known as a means of recognizing the better known, for a portrait cannot be more natural or more like the sitter than the sitter himself nor yet the exact image of him. For this reason we should say, rather, that Aristotle does not really consider a portrait as a means of recognizing some one whom we

already know — no one needs a portrait for that purpose — but, as we have said, as a means of recognizing the similarities and dissimilarities between the portrait and the original. It is indeed true that we may sometimes have recourse to a portrait as an instrument of recognition, but that happens only when we know the painted figure better than the subject, as when, for instance, we come to know the form of the elephant by consulting the painting of one. We have already pointed out that one of the reasons why imitations give us pleasure is that they teach us what we do not know.

The paintings of monsters that have never existed and have remained unknown to us because we have never seen them or heard of them or had them brought to our notice by other means — examples of them can be seen in some Flemish canvasses — do not give us the pleasure peculiar to imitations, though their execution may delight us by other means. Similarly, monstrous or fantastic episodes representing what has never happened or what is commonly judged by the people to be impossible or improbable — such episodes as may perhaps be read in Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* and in certain books in the Spanish tongue — cannot, again, give us the pleasure peculiar to imitations, though poems in which they appear may delight us by the purity of their diction, the ornament of the figures, and the music of their verse....²

8

The Inventors of the Species of Poetry

[1.104] So far Aristotle has been concerned with the inventors of poetry in general. He now directs his attention to the inventors of the species of poetry. Poetry, he says (4. 48b 24–26), divided into two species because the men who wrote it, like mankind in general, were of two kinds, the austere or noble, and the jocund or baseborn.¹ The former invented and composed serious or magnificent, the latter comic or plebeian poetry, each the kind that bore a resemblance to themselves. It is to be recalled, however, that though in discussing the objects of imitation Aristotle asserted that they gave rise to three species of poetry according as the men imitated were better than we, or worse, or like us, he now loses sight of the third species and speaks of only two despite the fact that he is speaking of the species of poetry constituted by the objects imitated. But if the objects of imitation give rise to three species of poetry, the inventors of poetry, who are also men, ought likewise to be divided into three groups, the austere, the jocund, and those who fall between the two, so that by following each his own nature the last group of poets could, like those of the other two, produce poetry after their own kind. That they do not may be briefly explained by observing that extremes are at first always more conspicuous than the mean and that men for that reason seize hold of

the better-known extreme before the mean, which is not constituted until the two extremes move the one upward and the other downward to meet at the middle point between them. It is therefore no wonder that the first poetry to be invented was the two species in question and that their inventors were men of only two types.

Now since each of the two species is divided into three other species, which, though invented and produced by the austere and the jocund according to their natures, were not therefore invented at the same time but successively, as if one had grown out of the other, it will be instructive to draw up two lists, arranging the species of poetry in the order of their appearance.

Poetry

Serious	Comic
1. Encomiums	1. Lampoons
2. Epic poetry	2. Iambic poetry
3. Tragedy	3. Comedy

Of some of these species of poetry Aristotle speaks briefly and of some at length. He speaks briefly of lampoons, encomiums, and iambic poetry. He speaks at length of tragedy and epic poetry, and promises to do the same for comedy. If some one should ask me the reason for this, I could only repeat the answer I have already given, that Aristotle's intention in this book was to treat only the poetry which was performed or recited for the entertainment of the public in the city squares, i.e., tragedy, comedy, and epic poetry, and that if he speaks of the other kinds he does so incidentally and to shed light upon those to which the *Poetics* is devoted. That this is the true answer appears from the fact that Aristotle does not list dithyrambic poetry under serious poetry, nor phallic poetry under comic, though he will later (4.49a 9-13) speak of both in so far as each entered into the development, the former of tragedy and the latter of comedy. Some one may wonder why Aristotle should have listed the epic under serious poetry alone and thus have designated it as the mother of tragedy and of no other species of poetry, for he has already said that epic poetry imitates all three types of men², and in the passage under consideration he tells us that Homer wrote the *Margites*, which was an epic poem imitating men worse than the ordinary and which, as he believes, laid down the main lines of comedy. The probable explanation is that epic poetry being by nature a species of narrative (or historical) poetry and composed in a noble metre fit to serve as a vehicle for many noble actions, it is also by nature serious and not comic, for nothing should be admitted into histories except the noble and the memorable. For this reason both epic poems and epic metre are called heroic, and they have been made to imitate the worse type of men only by being forced out of their natural course. On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that the *Margites* is not composed exclusively of hexameters, for, as Victorinus attests in his *Ars Grammatica* (2. 4), its hexameters now and again give way to an iambic line. Hence John Tzetzes can say in his *Chiliades* (4. 867ff.) that

Homer composed ἡρωαίμβους (both heroic and iambic verses) against Margites.

* * * * *

[I.107] Homer was a single person, yet he wrote the *Margites*, which is a jocund poem, and the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which are austere. He did not, therefore, always follow his own nature or moral bent, which must have been either jocund or austere. That inconsistency is not unusual among poets, for as Aristotle will say below (17.55a 33) the poet must possess a flexible nature and be capable of undergoing transformations of every kind. Hence it does not seem necessarily true that poets of an austere nature invented serious poetry and those of a jocund nature comic poetry. What seems probable is that the inventors of the several species of poetry were men of inquiring minds³ given to observing their own natures and those of others whether these latter were like or unlike their own. It would seem, in fact, that people take greater pleasure imitating what is unlike than what is like themselves, perhaps because they hope that since the former is the more difficult accomplishment it will earn them the higher praise. And so in cities which celebrate the carnival season with masquerades, one may observe that austere men and nobles commonly impersonate buffoons and the baseborn, whereas buffoons and the baseborn impersonate the austere and the noble.

* * * * *

[I.107] If I understand the matter correctly the first lampoons and encomiums possessed two conjoint characteristics: they were in the probative and not in the narrative mode,⁴ otherwise they would not have been named lampoons or encomiums but histories or narratives, and their subjects were known individuals, for they came into being before the invention of the plot. If that is so, the question may well be raised whether lampoons and encomiums were genuine poetry, for Aristotle would have it that poetry must not imitate actual or historical events and that where these are imitated the result is not poetry but history. It is a fact, of course, that when one relates something that has happened or has already been told in writing, he is not a poet but a historian, even though he tells his story in the most admirable verse. The reason for this has already been given (I.9). It is that the person who merely puts a known story into verse shirks the labor of invention; yet invention is the most difficult part of the poet's art, and it seems it was with an eye to the poet as inventor that the Greeks gave him a name that signifies "maker." On the other hand, when a poet composes a poem in praise or blame of some one, it signifies nothing that that some one is a real or a credible imaginary person, for it is as great a labor to invent an argument in praise or in blame of a real person as of an imaginary one. The truth of this will be impressed on anyone who will undertake to praise Iphigenia and Jephtha's daughter, both of whom consented with marvelous resolution to be offered as sacrificial victims, the former in the hope that her death would enable her father to over-

come his foes, the latter in the knowledge that her father had overcome his only after vowing that he would offer her in sacrifice.⁵ It is therefore clear that nothing can forbid us to take a real person as well as an imaginary one as the subject of a lampoon or an encomium and that one is no less a poet when his subject is the former of these than when it is the latter. Hence Pindar and other poets who have written in praise of actual men for their actual deeds have not been denied the title of good poets....

Aristotle's assertion that the austere and the noble applied themselves to the writing of encomiums and their opposites to the writing of lampoons seems to be without foundation, for the condemnation of evil is no less the peculiar task of austerity, nobility, and gravity than the praise of goodness. Nor do the jocund and baseborn inevitably devote themselves to the general condemnation of all wicked deeds that come to their notice; they choose, rather, to condemn only those things that interfere with the free exercise of their jocundity and coarse manners, and they do so not rationally and judiciously but by holding them up to ridicule.

The truth, then, seems to be that the inventors of the kinds of poetry under consideration were not those whom Aristotle names. A fact that should perhaps have been noted is that there are magnanimous and high-hearted men who will not condescend either to take notice of or to write about other actions than those of gods and kings; and since no one but desires to appear a good man in his public acts, as when he writes for the world at large, these men composed poems in praise of gods and virtuous kings, and some also in condemnation of wicked kings. On the other hand there are mean-hearted and pusillanimous men who dare not contemplate any actions but those of private persons, and since, as I have said, everyone endeavors to appear as a good man before the public, they devoted their talents to praising the good among them and reprobating the bad. It was perhaps in the light of these two factors that the two kinds of poetry were constituted, i.e., first, by the kinds of persons whom the poets in general took for their subjects and, second, by the natural inclinations of the poets, the noble being predisposed to write about gods and kings, the base about private persons and slaves, regardless of the virtues or vices of the subjects in either class. But since there are still two other classes of men with a penchant for poetry, viz., the austere and the jocund, poetry was divided into two other classes, one of which treated its subjects seriously and the other comically, without regard to their social rank or virtue; or, rather, there sprang up two qualities that nearly always accompany the two classes of poetry which, as we have said, were constituted by the social rank of its subjects; for it does not seem that seriousness can properly be dispensed with in the treatment of the actions of gods and kings nor comicality in that of private persons and slaves....

Part III

Tragedy

I

The Definition of Tragedy

[1.155] *Poetics* 6. 49b 22–31: "Let us now speak of tragedy, formulating the definition of its substance by gathering together things already said. Tragedy is the imitation of a magnificent and complete action having magnitude, [which imitation is produced] by each of the species of performers who imitate [the action] separately in the separate parts [of the tragedy] by means of language that has been made pleasurable, and not by reciting a narrative. In addition to that, through pity and fear it effects the purgation of such emotions. By "language made pleasurable" I mean language accompanied by rhythm, harmony, and melody. By "the species [of performers who imitate] separately" I mean that the imitation is at times produced by means of metrical language alone and at other times by means of melody" [dancing, song, and music].¹

* * * * *

[1.155] The words "Let us now speak of tragedy" mark the beginning of Aristotle's discussion of tragedy. This discussion would seem to proceed in the following manner from the things that have already been said. It has before this been firmly established (5.49b 9–20) that all the constituents of tragedy are to be found in epic poetry so that the person who can discriminate between the good and the bad in tragedy is *ipso facto* qualified to discriminate with equal competence between the good and the bad in epic poetry. That being so, tragedy is properly to be considered before epic poetry, which can then be treated separately on a later page, but before comedy, to which it should be accorded precedence because of the magnificence of its matter. (Tragedy, epic poetry, and comedy were the species of poetry which were more than the rest presented publicly for the pleasure of the populace, and they are the species to which Aristotle intends to devote most of his attention in the *Poetics*.) Aristotle, however, omits to indicate the course by which he arrived at the discussion of tragedy, assuming that it would be evident to all, and simply undertakes to formulate the definition of its substance, a definition that grows out of a number of ideas scattered in the earlier pages of his book. But though he

specifies only the substance, we must not for that reason believe that he can ignore the accidents; they too must be brought into the definition, and in fact the word substance is intended by him to convey the double sense of "substance and accidents." The definition of tragedy will offer him occasion for discovering its qualitative and quantitative parts, and the investigation of each of these will fill the pages devoted to this subject.

Aristotle asserts that he formulates his definition by gathering together ideas that had already been advanced in earlier pages. Let us, then, turn to those pages and search for the ideas from which the definition has been constituted. The definition opens with the statement that tragedy is an imitation. This idea we have already encountered, especially in the words (1. 47a 13-16) "Epic poetry and tragedy... are all found to be imitation." Aristotle next says that it is the imitation of actions, not, however, of any and all actions, but only of such as can be called magnificent. Both these ideas were advanced earlier, not, as some would have it,² in the words (2. 48a 1-5) "Since imitators imitate men in action, and these men must be either good or bad," for then it would follow that tragedy imitates men in so far as they are good, which we must never for a moment concede, tragedy being the imitation not of men but of actions. The relevant words are these (4. 48b 25): "The nobler poets imitated magnificent actions and those of men like [themselves]." Though the poets referred to here are the writers of encomiums, the statement applies also to the tragic poets, for the writers of encomiums were succeeded by the epic poets and the epic poets by the tragic (II. 8), who like their predecessors imitated not every kind of action but only the magnificent. And since the actions imitated by the epic poets were not only magnificent but complete, those of the tragic poets, for the reason that they came into being after them, must also be complete. A second requirement of tragic actions is that they have magnitude. Aristotle spoke of magnitude as a property of tragic actions and set its limits in the words (5. 49b 12-13): "Tragedy endeavors as far as possible to keep its action within one revolution of the sun, or to exceed that period of time by only a little." A single revolution of the sun determines the magnitude of the plot, which in turn is the formal cause of the magnitude of the tragedy.³ He then asserts that the medium of imitation for tragedy is language so handled that it has gained the capability of giving pleasure. That language is divisible into three species: metrical language, rhythm (dancing), and harmony (song and instrumental music), which have already been referred to in the words (1. 47b 24-27) "Some arts employ all the media mentioned, namely rhythm, harmony, and metrical language." He then adds that each of these species is represented on the stage by a different kind of performers. This had been said in the words (4. 49a 15-19) "Aeschylus was the first to increase the group of performers from one to two" and "Sophocles [increased them] to three."⁴ He says further that performers represent imitations on the stage not by the simultaneous use of metrical language, rhythm, and harmony, nor by first reciting all the spoken parts and then exhausting first one and then each of the remaining media but by representing one of its parts with language, another with another medium, and so on, repeating the

process until the end. This had been said in the words (1. 47b 27-28) "But they differ in this respect, that the first two [dithyrambic and nomic poetry] employ all the media simultaneously, the last two [tragedy and comedy] separately." Again, the imitation is not represented by a single person reciting a narrative but by a number of performers, as we could already have learned from the words (3. 48a 23-24) "The imitators appearing as engaged in a variety of actions," and again from the words (4. 49a 11) "Epic poetry is in the narrative mode." Finally he says that by means of pity and fear the imitation effects the purgation of such emotions. This idea must be implicit in the passage in which Aristotle tells us that tragedy succeeded epic poetry. For if epic poetry effected the purgation of pity and fear by telling piteous and terrifying stories in the narrative mode, tragedy, which, as we have said, adopted the plot as well as other constituents of epic poetry, should produce this effect all the more powerfully for the reason that it is represented on the stage.

The word "imitation" governs two genitives quite different in nature: "of an action" and "of performers." The first of these is passive and designates the thing performed, the second is active and designates the performers. In the phrase "This copy of the *Aeneid* of Virgil" the word "copy" governs two genitives, the first passive and the second active, "of the *Aeneid*" designating the thing made, "of Virgil" the maker. Since tragedy is an imitation and there can be no imitation without an imitator and a thing imitated, it follows that, rightly considered, an imitation is what it is in both an active and a passive sense. Therefore "imitation" may rightly be taken to govern the two above-named genitives, the first of which, as we have shown, is passive and the second active, and we may translate the noun and the two genitives by "the imitation of an action ... by performers." Now since the imitator (actor, performer) may and actually does vary in nature according to the medium he employs, it follows that the word "performers" designates four species of imitators or performers: speakers, dancers, singers, and musicians; for the media of imitation are four: language, dancing, song, and instrumental music. Each species of performers, as we have already said, produces its imitations at different times in the course of the performance, and each with its own medium. When all four are on the stage they are not all performing simultaneously; when the speakers are speaking the dancers, the singers, and the musicians are at rest; and when these last are performing the speakers are silent. All this Aristotle says plainly in these words: "Tragedy is an imitation ... by each of the species of performers who imitate by means of pleasurable language separately in the separate parts." Performers, as we have said, are divided into four species, according to the media they employ in producing their imitations, and also into two, according as they are able to perform simultaneously, as they do in dithyrambic poetry, or at different times, as they do in tragedy. One of the four species mentioned above, that of the speakers, is to be subdivided into two, for some of them produce their imitation dramatically, the others by simply reciting a narrative. Only the first of these two species of performers is proper to tragedy. Aristotle used the generic term "performers" to designate the four species of performers; but desiring to restrict the species who have the

speaking parts to those proper to tragedy, i.e., to those who produce their imitation dramatically, he adds, "and not by reciting a narrative."

In my opinion the interpretation which Aristotle will give below to the phrase "language rendered pleasurable" indicates that he would have us take it in the sense of "language accompanied by rhythm, harmony, and melody," i.e., by dancing, instrumental music, and song, and that he believes it to be silent on the subject of the metre; for holding, as he does, that metre is necessary to every kind of poetry, he assumes that the spoken part of tragedy must be in verse. But if some obstinate soul should insist that the phrase refers also to metrical language,⁵ we should be constrained to interpret "rhythm" as "dancing," "harmony" as "instrumental music and song," and "melody" as "metre and the harmony of verse," and by that interpretation avoid the need to emend μέλος to μέτρον, as some would do against the authority of all the received readings of the text.⁶ And indeed if we were to take the adjective "pleasurable" to indicate that the language described by it is accompanied by metre and the harmony of verse, we should then have to take "language" in the sense not of "speech," i.e., the spoken part of tragedy, but of "medium," i.e., "the medium with which the imitation is produced," for it would be quite unreasonable to call dancing, song, and instrumental music "language rendered pleasurable," a phrase normally used to designate language accompanied by metre.

The word "performers" designates not only the performers who have the spoken parts in a tragedy but also who dance, sing, and play musical instruments.

Aristotle, it is to be believed, took pains to add the words "and not by reciting a narrative," emphasizing that tragedy is not in the narrative mode, to distinguish it not so much from epic as from dithyrambic poetry. And in fact dithyrambic poetry, which like tragedy imitated through the media of language, dancing, singing, and music, resembled tragedy much more closely than it did epic poetry, which imitates only through language, so that the distinction drawn here served more to differentiate tragedy from dithyrambic than from epic poetry.

In the sentence "In addition to this, etc." Aristotle seems to say, "Tragedy has not only the characteristics already named, but this one in addition, that by means of pity and fear it effects the purgation of such passions." This sentence is intended as a reply to his master Plato, whose view of the effect of tragedy was the opposite of Aristotle's. To understand just how, according to Aristotle, tragedy effects the purgation of pity and fear in the manner just mentioned, we must first observe that in so far as the definition in question says that tragedy is the imitation of a magnificent and complete action that has magnitude and neglects to add that the action is in good part imaginary and of the kind that has never happened but lies within the realm of possibility it falls short of completeness, as we have already shown and will show more fully hereafter (III.5a). Now it is the duty of the wise and discerning lawgiver to proscribe all arts, crafts, and practices that may in some fashion harm the citizens and corrupt their moral habits. Hence Plato, who believed that the

example set by tragic personages might produce these evil effects in them by making them pusillanimous, cowardly, and compassionate, would forbid the representation of tragedy in his republic (*Rep.* 10. 602D-608B), fearing that if the citizens saw and heard men whom they held in high esteem doing and saying things that are usually said and done by the compassionate, the timorous, and the pusillanimous, they might take comfort and forgive themselves their own compassionateness, timorousness, and pusillanimity and, seeing that men in high place, such as kings, are not unlike themselves, learn from their example to be moved more than is suitable by those passions. To keep his readers from believing on the authority of Plato that by writing on the art of tragedy he was constituting an art that would harm the citizenry by corrupting their moral habits, Aristotle refutes him in a few words, saying that the effect of tragedy is the exact opposite of that which Plato deplors. Tragedy, he contends, by being frequently enacted on the stage, i.e., by frequently exposing men to scenes of a kind to excite their pity, fear, and pusillanimity, will fortify them against these weaknesses and thus make the pusillanimous magnanimous, the timorous brave, and the compassionate severe, which explains how with the emotions of pity and fear as a means tragedy purges and expels those very emotions from the hearts of men.

Let us now try to ascertain what Aristotle's exact meaning may be, for his own words are few and somewhat obscure: few, because as we have said more than once the *Poetics* is no more than a collection of notes to be utilized in the writing of a larger work; obscure, because he was perhaps restrained by reverence from refuting his master in plain words. We shall understand him better if we consider one or two analogies. A certain quantity of undiluted wine is stronger than a like quantity of the same wine that has been diluted with a great deal of water and thus exceeds the other wine in quantity; but the treatment it has undergone has made it watery and has robbed it of all its former strength. Again, a father will love his children more and be more solicitous of their welfare if he has only a few, say one or two or three, than if he has a great many, say a hundred or a thousand or even more. Thus men's pity and fear will be stronger and more distressing if concentrated on a few piteous and terrible events than if diffused over many. This explains why tragedy, through which we witness piteous and fear-inspiring events more frequently than we otherwise might, will weaken our emotions of pity and fear by causing us to diffuse them among a great variety of actions. Of this phenomenon we receive palpable proof from our experience in times of plague, when we are moved to pity and fear by the first three or four victims but later remain unmoved when the dead are counted in the hundreds and the thousands. In like manner, at their baptism of fire soldiers are terrified by the din of muskets and harquebuses and are moved to great pity by the wounded and the dead; but they later return to the field with composure and cease to be moved to great pity by their wounded and dying comrades.

These are very strong arguments, but perhaps not strong enough to warrant the repeal of Plato's law, for they do not contemplate the evils that Plato sought to proscribe. This will become clear if we consider that in tragedies we have

on the one hand actions arousing pity and fear and on the other characters undergoing piteous and terrifying experiences. Tragic characters are of two kinds, brave and faint hearted, and tragic actions are also of two kinds, those of rare and those of frequent occurrence. If the character who suffers is courageous and patient, his example will instill courage and patience in the souls of others and purge them of pity and fear; if he is faint-hearted and weak, his example will make the spectators even more timorous and compassionate, and will confirm them in their fear and pusillanimity. Proof of this may be found among those to whom the light of the Gospel was revealed by a gracious Providence; for in places where some sustained their martyrdom with steadfastness and courage many others took heart from their example and followed it with unyielding resolution, but where the first called to bear witness to the truth were unnerved by the cruel torments and denied Christ, their apostasy proved to be a great scandal to the rest, and these likewise denied Christ for dread of those same torments. So much for the tragic characters and their effects upon the audience. As for the tragic incidents, the most piteous and most terrifying are those of rarest occurrence. Those of frequent occurrence move us less and seem to purge human hearts of pity and fear by their very frequency. There are two reasons for this. (1) Seeing ourselves untouched by many calamities all about us we gradually lose our fear of them and bring ourselves to believe that having spared us so often in the past God will continue to spare us in the future. (2) Calamities which occur frequently and involve many do not affect us as very terrible and consequently as very piteous even if we are certain that having struck down so many others they will one day descend upon us. And this, as we have seen, is how men learn to respond to great dangers in times of plague and on the field of battle. Therefore when Plato proscribed tragedy as apt to inspire and stimulate pity and fear he did so because he felt that the example of highly esteemed men showing a mean spirit in the face of adversity would be very injurious to the citizenry. But Plato's proscription can be accounted wise only if he is right in supposing that all tragedies represent only characters of that type. On the other hand the examples we have advanced in proof of Aristotle's simple assertion do not really demolish Plato's objections to tragedy, though they do give a true account of the effect of frequent calamities upon the human spirit.

Next it is to be noted that a large family of children seems less dear to us not because all our children, whether few or many, are not alike our children and alike our kin, but because the love which we bear a pleasurable thing is proportionate to its rarity. Thus we value a little gold highly because we have only a little, but if the quantity were multiplied many times the value we should attach to it would not be in exact proportion to that which we attach to the little. Further, the example of the two kinds of wine, the one diluted, the other undiluted, is beside the point. What we should have said is that the person who owns only one flask of good wine values it proportionately more highly than he would many barrels of it, the possession of a great abundance of it rendering it less precious. For a large number of children, as we have said, are no less our children and no less our kin than a few, and a great many adver-

sities are likewise no less adversities than a few.

The words "the species of performers who imitate [the action] separately, etc." are intended to convey precisely the same meaning as the earlier "Tragedy is the imitation... by each of the species of performers who imitate [the action] separately in the separate parts [of the tragedy] by means of language that has been made pleasurable." Their only function is to repeat the earlier words fully. They are susceptible of two interpretations. The first, which we have already advanced, is that tragedy is an action [enacted] by those who perform separately in various parts [of the tragedy, the performance having for its media] each of the species (*supply* Τοῦ λόγου ἡδυσμένου) of pleasurable language. The second, which we prefer, both because it is less forced and eliminates the need to supply a phrase after "species," is that tragedy is an action by each of the species of those who perform separately in various parts [of the tragedy], taking "species of those who perform" to designate the speakers, the dancers, the singers, and the musicians.⁷ Aristotle therefore clarifies his statement that each species of performers imitates the action in separate parts of the tragedy by dividing them into only two species, the first consisting of those who imitate with language alone and the second of those who imitate with dancing, singing, and music. Although the three groups in the second are, as we have seen, different from one another, they may yet be classified together because in certain parts of the tragedy they performed their several functions simultaneously, the speakers being at rest while they performed and vice versa. Observe also that "melody" designates dancing, singing, and music even though each of these arts is distinct from the others and is the concern of distinct performers. They are designated by one word both because the dancers, singers, and musicians always performed simultaneously and seem to be so closely related that one group of them could not perform without the others and because the dances, songs, and music of a tragedy are not the concern of the poet. For this reason Aristotle will henceforth give them the single name of *melopoeia*.

2

The Qualitative Parts of Tragedy

[1.165] Having defined tragedy, Aristotle now (5. 49b 31–50a 15) proceeds to find its qualitative parts. They are six in number: spectacle (the performers, the costumes, and the stage), melody (dancing, song, and music), language, character, thought, and plot. These parts may be grouped under two heads, according as they address themselves to the imagination or to the eyes and ears. Under the first belongs the plot, and the plot being a representation of human actions necessarily draws to itself character and thought, for it is

through these that the virtues and vices of men in action are revealed. Now since we recognize the agents involved in the action or plot as good or bad through their moral traits (character) and the things they say (thought), and know them to be happy or unhappy according as the action fulfils or obstructs the fulfilment of their desires, which derive their peculiar quality from character and thought..., it is possible for the good and the bad alike to be either happy or unhappy.... And so if a tragedy sets before us a good man whose actions issue in happiness, the gratification that we feel silently welling up in us makes us rejoice both for our own sakes and his: for our sakes because being equal or not greatly inferior to him in virtue we begin to cherish the hope of presently enjoying the same happiness as he, and for his sake because we feel a longing to rejoice with him so that he may know that we are happy to have witnessed the fulfilment of his desires. But if the tragedy represents a good man as unhappy, we feel a sadness silently welling up in us both for our sakes and his, for seeing that the good are not exempted from unhappiness we are seized by the fear that being inferior to him in virtue we may be visited by the same or even greater evils and at the same time feel pity for him because he has fallen into an unhappiness which a man of his virtue should in justice have been spared. On the other hand if the tragedy represents a bad man who attains the fulfilment of his desires, we experience only feelings of displeasure, for we are filled with indignation to see one happy who should be unhappy and with envy to see him happy beyond his deserts. But if a bad man is represented as unhappy, the feelings we experience are pleasurable, for we are cheered by the certain knowledge that not being as wicked as he, we shall never be visited by his sufferings, and rejoice to see that his malefactions have not eluded the eye of justice and have been duly punished.

Seeing that we are made unhappy by the sufferings of the just and the happiness of the unjust, some one might object that contrary to what we have assumed from the first, poetry is not invariably a source of pleasure, or at least that tragedy is in part not poetry. To this we reply that though witnessing the ill fortune of the good and the good fortune of the bad does indeed produce in us feelings of displeasure, yet rightly considered that displeasure must be judged to be really pleasure, since it is accompanied by a pleasure that sweetens it and renders it delightful. For the fact is that thanks to that displeasure we can become aware of having been afflicted by the unhappiness of the good and the happiness of the bad and thereby recognize ourselves to be good and just men. It is, then, to those feelings of displeasure that we owe the joy of recognizing ourselves to be just, and that joy is both genuine and profound. So much for the first group of the qualitative parts of tragedy.

The second group consists of the parts which address themselves to the eyes and ears. The parts which address themselves to the eyes are dancing and the spectacle; those that address themselves to the ears are language, song, and music. The terms "dance," "song," and "music," to which he gives the compound name of "melody," Aristotle does not take the pains to define, as he also omits to define "spectacle," both because they are no concern of the poet's art and because the meaning of the terms is plain to all. But having

defined "language," "plot," "character," and "thought," he concludes that the spectacle alone, which as we have said comprises the actors, the costumes, and the stage, is due to the mode in which tragedy produces its imitation; that language and melody, the second of which comprises dancing, song, and music, are due to its media; and that plot, character, and thought are due to its object. With this conclusion we cannot wholly agree. If we say that the spectacle is due to the mode of tragic poetry, we ought to attribute language to the same cause, and if we attribute language to the media, we ought to do the same with the spectacle; for tragedy represents not only words by means of words, but things by means of things, so that the things represented by the spectacle are in the same category with the words spoken by the characters. This is not true of epic poetry, which represents both words and things by means of words alone, and of the dance, song, and music, which represent both words and things. Hence there can be no doubt that in epic poetry language is a medium, though the use made of it there is different from that made of it in tragedy, for the mode of epic poetry being the narrative, language is there made to represent things and also words in the indirect or similitudinary-direct manner, whereas in tragedy it is used dramatically, representing only purely direct words and not things, nor, except incidentally, as we have shown (I.17), words that can rightly be called indirect or similitudinary.

Having, then, offered us the definition of tragedy, the elements of which he had considered singly in earlier pages, Aristotle now proceeds to investigate the qualitative parts of tragedy, which he calls species of tragedy¹ and which he derives from his definition of the term. First he discovers the part which he calls the spectacle, which, as he says shortly after, is the result of how the tragedy is represented. It is the part that constitutes the dramatic mode, which has already been discussed at length and which distinguishes tragedy and comedy from epic and dithyrambic poetry. To ascertain that the spectacle is a qualitative part of tragedy he reasons in the following manner: the definition of tragedy states that tragedy is the imitation of an action by performers who do not recite it but enact it before an audience. Hence it follows that the staging of a tragedy requires performers and also a stage, costumes, and other necessary equipment. Since all these persons and things are perceived by the eye, Aristotle appropriately enough applies to them the compendious term which is translated by "spectacle."

He next proceeds to discover two more qualitative parts of tragedy: melody and language. These two parts, like the preceding one, are implicit in the definition of tragedy, in which he had said that tragedy is the imitation of an action by means of language or "by means of language made pleasurable," i.e., with the fourfold medium of dancing, singing, music, and metre. All four of these media had been included in the sentence "by 'language made pleasurable' I mean language accompanied by rhythm, harmony, and melody." By "melody" he means dancing, singing, and music, and when he comes to define the term he says no more than that its meaning is well known to all. But he takes pains to explain the meaning of "language" so that no one should take it to mean prose language but know it as language ordered in measured verse.

* * * * *

[1.169] Three qualitative parts of tragedy, all of them the objects of imitation, remain to be discovered. They are plot, character, and thought. Aristotle finds them by reasoning as follows. Tragedy has been defined as the imitation of an action. But an action cannot be an action without human agents (for Aristotle's intention is to speak of human actions). Hence there can be no tragedy without character and thought, for everyone who acts possesses moral qualities and cannot dispense with thought. Further, character and thought being integral parts of those who act and the causes and concomitants of their actions, those actions are likewise said to be of a certain quality as being produced and informed by them. All men in action, then, possess moral qualities and thoughts, and so to imitate an action properly one must also imitate character and thought, which always accompany actions and are their causes. The last object of imitation is the plot. The plot is neither more nor less than the action, which was also included in the definition of tragedy, and is to be understood as a combination of incidents that are within the realm of the possible, by which a person may be judged to be happy or unhappy according as the events fulfill or obstruct the fulfilment of his desires.

Aristotle may also be said to have discovered the six qualitative parts of tragedy by following a different course. An action, he may have reasoned, cannot be represented without a stage, performers, and costumes, and these together constitute the qualitative part known as the spectacle. Of the performers, some represent the action by dancing, others by singing, still others by playing musical instruments, and the rest by speaking. We thus have two more qualitative parts, melody (dance, song, and music) and language. Speech and action reveal men's moral traits, and these constitute a fourth qualitative part known as character. The chief function of language is to express the thought of men in action. It is clear, therefore, that there is a fifth qualitative part, thought, which manifests more plainly than any of the others whether the action is happy or unhappy. Without an action there can be no tragedy — it is, as it were, the soul of tragedy. The action, then, is the sixth qualitative part of tragedy and is called the plot....

3

The Quantitative Parts of Tragedy

[1.140] According to Aristotle the qualitative parts of tragedy — plot, character, thought, language, melody, and spectacle — are not to be considered as species of tragedy in the strict sense of the term¹ but only in so far as tragedy as a genus of poetry seems to be divisible into the six of them, tragedy being con-

stituted throughout by these parts as a genus is by its species. The parts in question bear the same relation to tragedy as invention, organization, style, delivery, and memory bear to oratory; for they are qualitative parts of oratory, and each is, as it were, a species of oratory, each of the five being a component of the rhetorical art. Then just as in the art of rhetoric an oration is composed of six quantitative parts: exordium, statement of facts, proposition, confirmation, refutation, and peroration, so in the art of poetry a tragedy is said by Aristotle (12. 52b 14-27) to consist also of quantitative parts, viz., prologue, parade, episode, stasimon, episode, stasimon, episode, stasimon, exode. None of these parts extends through the whole of a tragedy or an oration; each constitutes one of its divisions and never extends beyond its proper bounds....²

* * * * *

[I.342] Aristotle seems to me to employ the term "episode" in four quite distinct senses, and we shall fail to grasp its true meaning unless we differentiate them from one another. (1) The term sometimes signifies the things which occur before or after the action forming the body of the poem and which poets incorporate into it by having them related by one or another of their characters or in some other way. Aristotle will say later (23.49a 35-37) that incidents of this kind are to be found in Homer, who having chosen a part of the Trojan war as subject for his *Iliad* fills his poem with "episodes," that is, with accounts of what preceded and followed the main action. (2) At other times it signifies incidents that occur within the time of the action and that in fact are a part of it, but because they take place at some distance from the scene of that action, the audience are acquainted with them by recitals in the mouth of some messenger or other person. Aristotle will say below³ that episodes of this kind are part and parcel of the plot. (3) At still other times (17. 55a 34-55b 23) it is applied to the things invented by the poet to particularize a plot known only in summary form. It may be remarked here that inventions of this kind that fail to conform to the known substance of the story or are not interdependent in a probable or necessary manner are condemned by Aristotle in the passage (9. 51b 33-35) in which he asserts that plots must not be "episodic." (4) Finally it is applied (11. 52b 20-21) to the quantitative part of a tragedy that falls between two choral songs. Since the chorus makes four appearances each tragedy contains three episodes of this last kind; and since a whole choral song marks the end of what the Romans call an act, the episode between the first and second choruses corresponds to the second act, the one between the second and third choruses to the third, and the one between the third and fourth choruses to the fourth. It is possible that these three acts are not called episodes without reason, for they usually consist of episodes of the first three kinds since the poet must fill the first and last, or fifth, acts with the action as known in its summary form and the others either with the inventions whereby he particularizes the summarized story or with the matter which acquaints the audience with things past, future, or remote.

Now just as the episodes we are discussing are commonly of the first three kinds, so they are introduced into the plot in three ways: (1) *ex proposito*, (2) *ex accidenti*, and (3) miraculously. (1) All particularized elements invented by the poet may be said to be introduced into the plot *ex proposito*, as may all accounts of incidents that took place before the beginning of the action or simultaneously with it but in a different place when the speaker makes them known as he ostensibly tells of other matters or for an end other than the mere telling. Thus in the first part of Terence's *Andria* Simo acquaints Sosia with certain things that occurred before the beginning of the action not simply to make them known but for a different end. I call this method *ex proposito* because it results in a web of incidents so related that they have a probable or necessary dependence on one another. (2) Past occurrences and those that take place at a distance from the scene of the action may be said to be introduced *ex accidenti* when they are related by messengers or other persons who come upon the stage for the express purpose of relating them. It is to be borne in mind that messengers are not to be made use of except to report some matter of great moment and to persons who may credibly be represented as receiving them. (3) Incidents may be said to be introduced miraculously when they are made known by apparitions of the dead, or by dreams, visions, prophecies, oracles, and the like. This method is used to reveal past, future, and remote occurrences. Past and remote occurrences are so introduced when, at least at the time and place of the main action, they cannot be known except through a revelation. Such occurrences are customarily related in a manner quite different from that of prophecies, i.e., clearly and exactly as they happened, whereas prophecies should be delivered obscurely and enveloped in figurative language. Examples of the proper handling of miraculous revelations of past and remote events may be found in the *Aeneid* (l. 353ff.), where Ildo has a vision of Sychaeus and is told by him how he had been slain by his brother-in-law; in the *Decameron* (4. 5), where Lisabetta has a vision of Lorenzo and is told where and by whom he had been slain; and in the *Metamorphoses* (ll. 657ff.), where Alcyone has a vision of Ceyx and learns how he had drowned at sea. Dreams must never be used to reveal past events already known to the dreamer. A dream is misused by Petrarch in the first *capitolo* of his *Trionfo d'Amore*, where having told of his visit to Vaucluse after Laura's death, and therefore after he had become enamored of her, he tells of dreaming of both the beginning of his love and of her death. As if he had needed a miraculous dream to reveal to him what he knew well enough in his waking hours!...

4

The Relative Importance of the Qualitative Parts

[1.182] Aristotle has discovered the qualitative parts of tragedy and has proved that they are six in number. He now (6. 50a 15–50b 20) undertakes to ascertain their relative importance and to assign a rank to each. He begins by advancing five arguments to prove that plot is the most important of the qualitative parts, the one to be most highly regarded and to be ranked above the rest. The first two arguments seem to be concerned only with showing that plot is to be ranked above character, as if these two were the only parts contending for the highest rank; the last three with showing that it is to be ranked above not only character but also thought and language, as if melody and spectacle were no concern of the poet, as they are not of tragedy, or at least are not its inseparable concomitants. Both the first two arguments establish the superiority of plot to character, but as we shall presently see, the first establishes its superiority over the other parts as well, the second to thought, melody, and spectacle, but not to language.

The first argument runs as follows. The part of a thing which is its end is more important than the other part which is not and is to be ranked above it, for the end is a greater thing than the means to it. But the end of tragedy being the action (which is simply the plot) and not character, it follows that plot is to be ranked above character. Aristotle knew, however, that some might have questioned the assumption that the action and not character is the end of tragedy. To prove that it is he offers two reasons: (1) The end toward which a tragedy naturally tends is the reversal from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness. This reversal is effected not by character but by the action, which in its relation to tragedy is the substance of which character is an accident. Hence plot, not character, is the end of tragedy. (2) Tragic poets do not suit the action to character but character to the action; the persons they bring into a tragedy are there to serve the action. To make my meaning clearer I will say that the more remote end of a thing is more important than the less remote. Therefore plot, which is the ultimate end of tragedy, is more important than character. That character is not the ultimate end is proved by our statement above, that tragic poets do not suit the action to character but character to the action. And it is to be noted that his second reason confirms the truth that plot is to be ranked not only above character but above every other qualitative part of tragedy, for in tragedy each of these parts is made to subserve the action. We may therefore conclude that plot and not character is the end of tragedy.

The second argument is the following: if you can destroy the whole of a thing by removing one of its parts, that part is to be considered more important than every other that can be removed with less serious effect. The head,

for instance, is to be considered more important than either hand because if a man is beheaded the whole of him, i.e., the animal who is a man, is destroyed and he is no longer a body animated by a soul, but he will not be destroyed by the amputation of a hand; after that loss he will be all that he had been before, both animal and man. If, then, we find a characterless tragedy that is still a tragedy because it has a plot, and then a plotless tragedy that cannot be called a tragedy even though it contains persons with recognizable moral traits, it follows that plot is to be considered more important than character. This second argument establishes the superiority of plot not only to character, but to thought, melody, and spectacle, for a tragedy may lack these three parts as well as character. But it fails to establish its superiority to language, language being as necessary to tragedy as plot.

We now come to the third argument. Compare two tragedies, considering the plot, character, thought, and language of each. The first would be found perfect in character, thought, and language, and less perfect in its plot, the second perfect in its plot and less perfect in its other parts. Experience would clearly justify the conclusion that the second tragedy is superior to the first. We shall be more sensible of the force of this argument if we couch it in different terms. The most important part of a thing is the one which, being itself perfect, renders the imperfections in the other parts less censurable. A perfect plot will make imperfections in the character, thought, and language of a tragedy less censurable; but an imperfect plot will not be made less censurable by the perfection of these other parts. Therefore plot is to be ranked above character, thought, and language. And since we should arrive at the same conclusion if we balanced plot not only against the three parts just named but against those three augmented by melody and spectacle, this argument clearly proves that the plot is more important than any of the other parts.

The fourth argument is this: the part which contains elements that attract the soul more strongly to themselves than those that constitute the other parts must be ranked above these parts. Reversal and recognition, both elements of the plot, exercise a much stronger attraction on the soul than any of the elements that constitute character, thought, and language. Therefore plot is to be ranked above them. This argument does not prove that plot is to be ranked higher than melody or spectacle, for Aristotle will presently assert (6. 50b 15-18) that melody (dance, song, and music) affords more pleasure than any of the other five parts and that the spectacle has the power to attract to itself the souls of all its beholders.

The fifth and last argument runs as follows. A person learning an art will master those of its elements that are less difficult and of a lower rank before those that are more difficult and of a higher rank. Poets succeed with the characters and the language long before they learn to construct a good plot. Therefore plot is to be ranked above character and language. And since the development of all poets considered together as belonging to one or another age is to be known by the development of a single poet of a different age, we can also conclude that the poets of the first age, assuming that it was then they first essayed the art of tragedy, succeeded with the characters and the

language, and the poets of the second age succeeded with the plot, as if it was only then that they undertook to master the most difficult element of their art. This argument proves that plot is to be ranked above thought as well as above character and language, but not above melody or spectacle, which are autonomous arts whose relation to tragedy is an adventitious one.

Anyone bent on denying that the plot is more important than the other parts of tragedy could perhaps refute Aristotle's arguments without great difficulty. He could say first that the five parts of tragedy which Aristotle ranks below plot were invented before tragedy and were put to other uses than those to which they were later put by the tragic poets. For the fact is that long before the invention of tragedy men made both private and public use of language and developed it as an instrument for obtaining such things as they desired from one another; they danced, sang, and played musical instruments for their own satisfaction or the pleasure of an audience; they practiced the art of carpentry in the service of the community; and they were taught the varieties of human character by the philosophers and the invention of thought by the rhetoricians. It is therefore no cause for wonder that the first tragic poets or any poet in the process of mastering the art of tragedy should have achieved a perfect mastery of those parts before they learned to produce a well-constructed plot, for the plot, or at least plot in the form adapted to tragedy, was not invented until a later time. The parts under consideration, then, were perfected before the plot not because they were easier to master or because they were things of lesser dignity but because they were widely used for a variety of purposes before tragedy and have continued to be so used down to our own day.

In the second place it does not follow, as Aristotle himself knows, that because one part of a whole exerts greater powers of attraction on the soul and is more pleasurable than the others it is also to be more highly considered than those others and to be ranked above them. Before it is accorded that primacy it must meet one more test: it must have required more labor to produce than any of the other parts; for Aristotle will not rank melody and spectacle, or either of them, above plot, character, thought, and language even though melody is beyond cavil the most pleasurable of all the parts and spectacle exerts very great powers of attraction upon the soul. And his reason is that melody and spectacle can be produced with less labor than the other four parts. Hence when Aristotle has said that the plot, with its reversals and recognitions, exerts greater powers of attraction on the soul than character, thought, and language with their peculiar qualities, he has not thereby proved that it must be accorded a higher rank than these other parts; what remains to be proved is that the poet has found the plot the most toilsome of all the parts to produce. It should also be noted that many critics of these and earlier times deny that the plot exerts greater powers of attraction than some other parts. Some of these hold that the most pleasurable constituent of poetry is its language, others that it is its characters, and still others that it is its thought. On this subject I will say no more for the time being.

Finally, the first three arguments offered by Aristotle lose their force unless

it can be proved in addition that for the poet the construction of the plot is more toilsome¹ than the production of any of the other parts. This Aristotle fails to do. The arguments he advances would be perfectly valid if he were attempting to determine the relative superiority of the parts of a work of nature; in works of art the sole consideration is the effort which they require of the artist. Proof of this may be found in the arts of painting and of poetry. In painting, the history, i.e., the plot, is held to be a thing of no worth; in poetry it is so highly considered that Aristotle gives it a rank above all the other parts. These judgments rest on the proposition that the relative dignity of corresponding parts of different arts depends on the greater or lesser degree of exertion that they require of the artist's genius. Hence Leon Battista Alberti used to say that character held the highest rank among the constituent parts of the art of painting because its portrayal required the greatest degree of exertion on the painter's part....²

* * * * *

[1.189] Whether plot is ancillary to character or character to plot is a question of no slight importance; for if plot is the end of tragedy and consequently of every other species of poetry (for in the other species of poetry no less than in tragedy, plot is the end for which the other parts exist and is not ancillary to character but is served by it), it follows that many ancient and modern men of letters of great renown, and Julius Caesar Scaliger (*Poet.* 7. 3) among them, have gravely erred in asserting that it was the intention of good poets, as it was that of Homer and Virgil in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*, their most famous poems, to set before the world the best possible portrait of, say, a wrathful hero, a daring adventurer, or a wise man, and to depict the moral nature of each, with more of the same gabble; for if that were true, poets would not have introduced characters into their poems for the sake of the action, as Aristotle holds, but the action for the sake of the characters. Then, too, these authors fail to perceive that if character were the principal constituent of poetry and not a subsidiary one, it could not be the concern of poetic theory,³ human characteristics being by their nature the concern of philosophy and having in fact been treated by many philosophers, especially by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 2. 12 ff.) and Theophrastus, if the book of characters that goes under the latter's name is truly his. The first intention of good poets, then, such as Homer and Virgil in their famous works and others like them, was to compose an excellent plot; it was only for the sake of the plot, to make it more excellent, i.e., to make it duly marvelous and probable, that they introduced the characters, each with suitable moral traits.

But even now some one might say: "I see from what has already been said and will be said more fully in the sequel that the end of tragedy is to arouse pity and fear in the souls of an audience, and I see further that these emotions are stirred not only by the plot but also by the moral qualities of the persons represented, for the tragic person cannot excite pity and fear unless he is a good man or at least a man of ordinary goodness at the same time that he is

made unhappy by the action. I therefore conclude that the end of tragedy is not the single one of plot but the double one of plot and character, that character contributes as much to its effect as plot, for its unhappy action fails to excite the tragic emotions unless the tragic person involved in it is good." To this we may reply that tragedy has two ends, one of which lies within its bounds and the other outside them. The first may be divided into two, each produced by one of two causes: one by the moral qualities which make the tragic person good, bad, or something between good and bad, the other by the plot in so far as it makes for the happiness or unhappiness of the tragic person. Considered within the bounds of the tragedy the two ends cannot be said to be equally primary or equally ultimate. Only one of them can be described as primary and ultimate, and that is the happiness or unhappiness engendered in the tragic person by the action; the other, the goodness or badness constituted by the moral qualities of the agents, is ancillary to the plot and for that reason is less than either a primary end or an ultimate end. The second reaches out beyond the tragedy and penetrates the souls of the spectators, producing in them the emotions of pity and fear. This end results from the equal action of both plot and character, and considered in their relation to it neither plot nor character can be said to exist for the sake of the other. And so when Aristotle asserts that the plot is the end of tragedy and that the function of character is to serve the plot, he is contemplating only the end that lies within the bounds of tragedy, for when the end considered is that which lies beyond those bounds, plot and character are seen to operate with equal potency....

* * * * *

[1.194] Aristotle says (6. 50a 38-39) that the plot is "the beginning" and "the soul" of tragedy....⁴ But some one might ask how the plot could be the beginning and nothing but the beginning of tragedy when it has already (6.50a 22-23) been called its end. The proper answer is that the plot is both the beginning and the end of tragedy depending on the way in which it is considered. Considered as a thing made by the poet it is a beginning, for the poet composes the plot before he turns his hand to the other parts; considered as a part of the tragedy related to the other parts it is the end, for those parts are fashioned thus and so to suit the plot and are always regardful of the plot as their end. Hence the plot will be the beginning not only for its great importance in the tragedy but also because it should properly be composed before the other parts. What is more, there is no doubt that the soul is superior to the body and that in all its actions the body follows the movements of the soul; hence the plot is superior to the other parts of tragedy, which constitute, so to speak, its body and follow and obey the plot as the members of the body follow and obey the soul if the tragedy is to win the world's approval....

Aristotle, as we have just seen, ranks the plot above the other qualitative parts for five reasons. Second place he assigns to character, his one reason being that though all five of the parts below the plot are brought into tragedy for the sake of the plot, character deserves second place because it serves the

plot much more effectively than the rest. Why it does so we are not told, nor are we told why the four remaining parts are assigned their respective places. Let us therefore see if we can do for ourselves what Aristotle has failed to do for us and assign to each part its just rank for the correct reason.

Before we do this, however, let us consider in what way the plot is served by each of the other five constituent parts. The plot, according to Aristotle, is the combination of the incidents that go into the making of a tragedy; as I understand the term, it is its invention (the sum of things invented) or its subject. This invention resolves itself into that of visible and that of invisible things. Visible things are those which are perceived by the eye, as are murders, adulteries, and the like. Invisible things are those which are inaccessible to the eye, things which, like thoughts, are hidden in the human mind and are commonly manifested by means of language. To make this invention visible and audible the poet has need of two media, one for his invention of visible things (costumes for the actors and properties for the stage) and another (language) for his invention of invisible things, i.e., his agents' thoughts. What is more, the ancients, especially Aristotle's contemporaries, sought to make this twofold invention visible and audible by means of dance, song, and music. Thus the media gave rise to three parts of tragedy, spectacle, language, and melody (this last consisting of dance, song, and music), and the object to one, the plot. But since the plot, the part which owes its being to the object imitated and which I here term the invention, is manifested through agents possessing certain moral qualities, it follows that what is made visible and audible is not only the invention (plot) but also the moral qualities of the agents. These moral qualities are manifested in a subsidiary way by gesture or speech, spectacle and language being no less media for the manifestation of character than of plot. Finally, since the human actions which tragedy makes its subject matter are not mere operations of natural instinct but the willed enactments of rational purpose, and the audience desires to know not only what the characters do but the reason for their doing it, Aristotle declares that thought is one of the six parts of tragedy. Thought, too, is an invention, and it takes form in the minds of the agents and is manifested in the medium of language. The poet, however, may manifest human actions, which constitute the subject of a tragedy, by means only of language and spectacle, without representing the moral traits of the agents; and indeed we have it from Aristotle that this was the practice of the tragic poets of his own time (6. 5a 25-26). And it is also possible to represent an action without revealing the agents' thoughts. For this reason Aristotle has set character and thought off by themselves as being quite different things from the invention or plot. Yet if they are rightly considered they will perhaps not be found to be different, nor will it be found necessary to set them off as distinct parts. An action cannot be well seen and heard unless it is represented with all its constituent parts and in the form in which it could be seen and heard in life. And since when men do in life what they are represented as doing in tragedy they do not conceal their characters, it follows that though not a part of the action character cannot be considered as distinct from it; for as we know, character is the in-

separable concomitant of action, reveals itself through the action, and there can be no action without it. On the other hand though it seems possible that tragedy may disregard thought because though a part of the invention and in fact its source and, as it were, its soul, it sometimes remains hidden in the mind, we must not for that reason believe that it is something distinct or different from the invention, a something which tragic poets bring to the light by now and then creating an occasion for the agents to give expression to it either in soliloquy or in dialogue. In epic poetry thought must not be kept hidden, for it is a principal part of the invention, and the hearers desire to know precisely what thoughts occupy the characters' minds. Moreover it is easier to reveal the thoughts of characters in narrative than in any other type of poetry, for the epic poet not only detects the secrets of the human mind, but penetrates to the abyss, and soaring above the heavens presumptuously scrutinizes the very bosom of God. It is therefore evident that since thought is a part, and a principal part, of the action it cannot rightly be separated from the action or be given a rank below or other than that of the action. And if we deny it first place because we can see and hear an action without it, we must at least accord it second place. Further, since character is brought into tragedy for the sake not only of the action but also of the thought, we must assign to it not second place among the parts of tragedy, as Aristotle does, but third. And we assign fourth place to the spectacle and to language because these parts are introduced to make the first three parts visible and audible. If some one should ask which of these two should outrank the other, the obvious answer will be that language should be ranked above spectacle. We cannot, however, accept what seems to be Aristotle's reason, that language is the proper concern of the poet and that the spectacle is not; for it is possible for one to have the skill to construct an excellent plot, enriched by character and thought, and yet be less skilful in clothing and adorning it with language than another whose plots would show less structural skill than his. Hence the language need not be the work of the same mind that constructs the plot and invents the thought. That this is so may be seen in Plautus, Terence, and many other Latin poets, who appropriated plot and thought from many a dramatic work by Greek writers, thereby shirking the labor that the composition of these two parts entails, and clothed them in the Latin language. And they did so because though they usurped the name of poets they were in fact mere versifiers or translators, incapable of producing a good plot and appropriate thought. Language is to be ranked higher than spectacle for two reasons: (1) because it is more difficult to suit language to the plot and to the agents' thoughts than to design suitable costumes for the actors and suitable properties for the stage and (2) because the language preserves the plot of a drama and its characters and their thoughts for many years and in fact for all time, and it is thanks to the language that we are able at whatever time and in whatever place to design suitable costumes for the actors and suitable properties for the stage.

The fifth and last place we assign to melody, that is, to dancing, singing, and music. We are aware, of course, that melody is a very difficult art and

delightful to sight and hearing; but it is not necessary to tragedy, not necessary in the sense that it does not contribute toward making the plot, the thought, and the characters visible and audible in the manner in which an action is visible and audible in life. Melody was brought into tragedy simply to make it more delightful and to show how far the plot, the thought, and the characters could be made visible and audible by bodily movement, by song, or by musical sound....

* * * * *

[1.203] If anyone should desire to see the six qualitative parts in a different order from the one in which we have ranked them, he should know that that order could be changed by changing the reasons for which the several ranks were assigned. Thus a qualitative part of a tragedy should be ranked above the others if it meets two conditions: that it is the most important of its constituent parts and that it is the most difficult to produce. But the plot is not only the most important of the qualitative parts of a tragedy; it is also the one part that must overcome more difficulties to attain its perfection than any other. Therefore the plot must in all reason hold the first place. And, indeed, what other part must confront a difficulty of the same magnitude as that which confronts the plot, the difficulty, namely, of inventing an action that has never happened in whole or in part and is at the same time a possible action and of a kind that merits being told? Such a plot is, as it were, the substance of tragedy, to which the other parts attach themselves as accidents, and as far as we know, the making of it was not reduced to an art before Aristotle, who set forth his conception of that process in the *Poetics*. Keeping the same two conditions in mind, we shall give language the second place, for versification is a very difficult thing if properly attended to, as every poet knows who toils to invent new figures of poetic speech, something he must not fail to do if he desires to win praise in this department of his art. Nor can it be denied that language is a very important constituent of tragedy, for it is, as we have said, thanks to its language that tragedy is made visible and audible and is preserved for future times. Considered in the light of its difficulty thought merits third place since it cannot be properly fashioned but by a poet of excellent invention, which invention is no less a possession of the rhetoricians, who exercise it to attain their ultimate end, under which are subsumed three things to which they give the name of ends: the useful, the honorable, and the just, or their contraries: the harmful, the dishonorable, and the unjust. But of thought as a constituent of tragedy nothing need be said since tragedy may exist without it, as it may exist without the three remaining parts. The fourth place is given to character, the representation of which is less difficult than that of thought, for the nature of the virtues and the vices has been treated more extensively by the philosophers and the masters of divinity and also by the rhetoricians than by the poets. The fifth place belongs to spectacle. The production of the spectacle confronts the poet with few difficulties since he leaves the labor of producing stage properties and costumes to the

carpenter and the costumer; nevertheless he is not altogether free of them for he must draw up the specifications for others to follow. The last place is for melody, in the conception and execution of which the poet has no part, for it is constituted by the arts of music, singing, and dancing, all of them, as we have shown, quite unrelated to tragedy and, unlike the arts that constitute the spectacle, contribute nothing either to the constitution or the representation of tragedy.

5

The Plot and its Eight Requirements

[1.205] Aristotle has shown that the qualitative parts of tragedy are six in number and has ranked them in the order of their importance. He now (7. 50b 21–34) undertakes to show how each of these parts is to be fashioned if we would have a proper tragedy. Beginning with the plot he says that to be a well-made thing of its kind a plot must meet eight requirements: it must be a whole; it must have magnitude; it must have unity; it must be possible; it must not be episodic, i.e., it must not contain any superfluous and useless episodes; it must be marvelous; it must be complex; it must represent suffering. Some of these requirements are explicit and some implicit in the definition of tragedy. (1) The definition says that the plot must be complete: "Tragedy is the imitation of a magnificent and complete action." If the action is complete and entire it must necessarily be a whole, so that the word "complete" implies the word "whole." Aristotle obviously assumes this, for he says (7. 50b 23–24), "We have established that tragedy is the imitation of an action that is complete and a whole." (2) That the plot should have magnitude may be gathered from the definition, where Aristotle says that a tragedy is "the imitation of an ... action having magnitude." (3) The definition also says that tragedy is the imitation of an action. The noun "action" is in the singular, and from that we may infer that the plot should have unity. (4) Again, the definition says that the plot must be possible. Aristotle's word for the plot is *μῦθος*, that is, fable. A fable must consist of an action that has never happened, otherwise it would not be fable but a history. And since, as the definition has it, the fable relates a human action, and a human action either must have happened or must lie within the realm of possibility, it follows that the tragic fable, which does not relate what has happened, must relate what may happen. (5) The word "complete" in the definition not only signifies that the plot must be a whole, but also implies that it must not be swollen with superfluous and useless episodes. For a plot cannot be perfect if it is marred by the imperfection of such episodes. (6) The definition also implies that the plot must be marvelous, for it says that "through pity and fear [tragedy] effects the purga-

tion of such emotions," and a plot cannot arouse pity and fear unless it astounds us. (7) The words we have just quoted also imply that the plot must be complex, otherwise it could not arouse the emotions of pity and fear. (8) Finally, to arouse pity and fear a plot must not simply be marvelous, it must also represent suffering. Aristotle's conception of each of these attributes of the good plot will be considered in the succeeding eight chapters of this commentary (III. 5a-h)....

* * * * *

5a

It Must Be a Whole

[1.208] The first requirement of a tragic plot is that it must be a whole. A whole Aristotle defines (7. 50b 26-27) as "that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end." The relation of this definition to the realities of poetic plots will be examined presently. For the time being we will ignore the concept of the whole as it applies to plots and consider that some wholes (the circle, the firmament, and God, who for this reason is properly symbolized by the circle) have no beginning or middle or end; that others (the rational soul and the angels, both the elect and the damned) have a beginning but no end; and that still others have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Yet the properties of a whole will differ according to the manner in which it is considered. The firmament, for instance, considered as a round figure will have no beginning or middle or end, but considered as a created thing subject to decay it will have all three, as it will if considered in ways which the reader may easily imagine. For this reason we should have been better served if we had been shown in how many ways a whole may be considered and which conception of the whole is applicable to the plot. Lacking that, we are obliged to proceed blindly in a matter of great importance.

* * * * *

[1.208] Aristotle now (7. 50b 26-34) considers the nature of the three parts constituting a whole. The beginning must fulfil two requirements: its dependence on something preceding it must not be a necessary one, and it must be that upon which incidents subsequent to it, both those already in being and others that will logically come into being at a later time, depend. Considered in relation to what precedes it a beginning possesses two characteristics: it either is in no way dependent on it, or it does not depend on it in such a way that it cannot exist without it. Considered in relation to what follows, it again possesses two characteristics: it logically precedes what is already in being or what will come into being at a later time. We say this because there are many things whose beginnings are immediately followed

by the middle and the end, and many others in which the middle and the end appear some time after the beginning. Yet in the others the middle and the end must depend upon the beginning, otherwise they would not be middle and end. Hence Aristotle defines the end as that which *naturally* follows something else, for it is natural that the middle and end should follow the beginning. The beginning of a plot, then, must not be bound by necessity to an antecedent action. The beginning of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* is bound by necessity to Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, and cannot be understood without a full knowledge of that poem. Hence the poem has this defect among others, that its beginning is unacceptable as a true beginning.¹

* * * * *

[1.209] If a beginning presupposes a sequel that is already in being or will appear in due course, an end presupposes antecedents that are still in being or have disappeared, for beginnings sometimes co-exist with their endings and sometimes do not, having already separated themselves from them. The relation of an ending to its beginning is sometimes necessary and sometimes only probable (it is the kind of thing that may *usually* be expected to follow the beginning). But this inquiry into the various kinds of endings remains incomplete, for in addition to the necessary and the probable we must recognize a third variety that may be designated as unusual. There are, then, three kinds of endings: the necessary (death always follows birth), the probable (a roof is usually put over the foundations and walls of a house), and the unusual (rejected suitors sometimes hang themselves).

* * * * *

[1.209] The end is that which is not followed by anything else (7. 50b 30). If the *Aeneid* and the *Iliad* have proper endings no sequel can rightly be appended to either poem. Yet Maphaeus Vegius added a thirteenth book to the *Aeneid* and has thereby won the plaudits of many a criticaster, and Quintus Smyrnaeus wrote a long sequel to the *Iliad*. That being so, we are obliged to censure either Virgil and Homer for having left their poems unfinished or Maphaeus Vegius and Quintus for having imposed sequels upon poems that had no need of them.

* * * * *

[1.210] Aristotle clearly teaches (7. 50b 27-34) that if it is to be properly constructed a plot must have a beginning that is not bound by necessity to anything preceding it and a middle and an end of the kind required for constituting wholes, otherwise it will fall short of achieving wholeness. But having commended as true the statement that "those who would construct a good plot cannot begin or end it anywhere they choose," we cannot deny that it contradicts and invalidates what he will say below (23. 59a 30-37), where he com-

mends Homer for not undertaking to treat the whole action of the Trojan war but only a part of it, for the whole action would have made a poem of an excessive length. In the passage in question he exalts Homer above all other poets for not choosing to make a single poem out of a whole war even though that war had a beginning and an end, for then the poem would have been excessively long, too long to be comprehended in one view, or of a moderate length but made too complicated by the variety of its constituent parts. What Homer did was to select one part of the war and then flesh it out with episodes (like the catalogue of ships and others) from its beginning and end.

Now it has been the opinion of both ancients and moderns, and especially of Horace (*Ars Poet.* 148ff.) and Rodolphus Agricola (*De Inventione Dialectica* 3. 7) — an opinion probably based upon these words of Aristotle — that the order of poetic is quite different from that of historical narrative. Historical narrative, they say, follows the order of nature, beginning with the initial stages of the first action and, proceeding through the middle, continuing to the end; poetic narrative, on the other hand, observes an artificial order: it begins in the middle or at the end of the story and then finds occasion for introducing episodes that relate what happened at its beginning, or middle or some other point before the end. And they affirm with great assurance that Homer followed this artificial order in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and Virgil in the *Aeneid*. Homer, they say, opens the *Iliad* with an incident in the middle of the Trojan war, the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, and as the occasions arise introduces episodes that relate what happened now at the beginning and now at the end of that war. He opens the *Odyssey*, they add, with an incident toward the end of Ulysses' homeward voyage, his departure from Calypso's island, and finds the occasion for relating antecedent events in his sojourn at the court of Alcinous in Corfu, where he is induced to tell the full story of his wanderings. (It must have been with the example of Homer's two poems in mind that Quintilian [*Inst. Or.* 7. 10. 11] teaches would-be lawyers that they must know when to begin their pleas at the beginning and when, *more Homeric*, in the middle or at the end.) They say, finally, that Virgil followed in Homer's footsteps, asserting that he begins the story of Aeneas' voyage to Italy with an incident near the end of the story, Aeneas' departure from Sicily, and avails himself of Dido's curiosity to put into his mouth the story of the first stages of that voyage, which he himself had left untold. This, in the opinion of some, accounts for the proverbial saying ὕστερον πρότερον 'Ομηρικῶς.² The opinion that poets should reverse the natural order of events has taken such firm and deep root in the minds of men that Jacques Peletier,³ a critic of no mean attainments, would deny the name of poet to Lucan and would number him among the orators for no other reason than that he relates the events of the Pharsalian war in the order in which they occurred. All these men, then, are unanimous in holding that poetic plots should be complete wholes but that their parts — beginning, middle, and end — should not, like the parts of a history, be introduced in their natural order.

To me Aristotle seems to hold no such opinion, though he does concede that when only a part of a story is told because the whole would have been

too long to tell in its entirety events at the beginning and the end may be made known by means of appropriate episodes. Nor can I believe that there is a difference between a normal historical and a normal poetic order; for if, as we have already said, poetry is representation and history, as the thing represented, is its model, for what reason should it depart from that model in the arrangement of its parts? The fact is that no one can offer a reasoned defense of the departure, and if it cannot be defended by theory, neither could it on that account be easily defended by the practice of the poets, not even by the example which its would-be defenders cite, the example, for instance, of the *Iliad*, in which, they would have us believe, Homer undertook to relate the whole story of the Trojan war and in so doing altered the natural order of its parts. But if Homer undertook to tell that story in full, it must seem strange indeed that he should have devoted so large a part of the poem to the wrath of Achilles, a very small part of the Trojan war, and so few verses to the coming of the Greeks to Troy and their nine years' siege of the city, during which they pillaged and put to the torch many cities, towns, and villages in the environs, slaughtering their inhabitants if they found them to be subject to the Trojans or their friends or allies, not to mention the many other notable things that happened before the beginning of Achilles' wrath. And after that wrath had been spent, why did Homer totally ignore or barely touch upon such memorable events as the capture and burning of Troy; the coming of Penthesilea, her daring exploits, and her death; the coming of Memnon, his valorous deeds of arms, and his death; and, not to extend the list unduly, the death of Achilles, the death of Ajax, and the numerous other exploits worthy of being recounted at very great length? The only explanation is that Homer never intended to tell the whole story of the Trojan war and that he did not reverse the natural order of its events; that he intended to tell only that part of the war that was occasioned by the wrath of Achilles or, to put it perhaps more exactly, that he chose as his subject not a part of the Trojan war but the wrath of Achilles, i.e., a single action of Achilles, and told the story in great detail, beginning at its beginning and proceeding through the middle to its end.

If anyone doubts this let him attend to Homer's announcement of his subject in the prologue, where no mention is made of the Trojan war but only of the wrath of Achilles. Nor should Homer's incidental recital of certain things that happened before or after the period of Achilles' wrath mislead us into taking them for integral parts of his subject. That subject is the wrath of Achilles; other things are narrated incidentally, as things indispensable to the development of the principal action. Such are things, past or future, which are made known not only by the poet speaking in his own person but by gods, seers, messengers, and the tellers of dreams as well as the characters whose story is being told and other persons besides; the speaker may be this person or that; but he is represented as speaking within the time of the principal action, and the fact that his subject is things past or yet to come does not make it unacceptable as part and parcel of that action. If we deny this we thereby deny and condemn as false what Aristotle holds to be an unshakable truth, namely

that the tragic action must not exceed the limit of one day. For where is the tragedy, or the comedy either, that can dispense with references to past events, even to long-past events, and sometimes with peering into the distant future? Yet these references to past and future things do not carry the tragedy beyond the limits of the day in which they are made. Hence Ulysses' recital of his wanderings at the court of Alcinous in Corfu must not be viewed as an action extending over many years but as one that began and ended within a few hours, more briefly as a credible speech of one evening's duration. In like manner, the account that Aeneas gives at Dido's court in Carthage of the capture of Troy and his subsequent wanderings must be viewed as an action of one evening's duration, as a speech lasting only a brief period of time. What is more the poet sometimes recounts past things or foretells future ones in his own person. But when he does so we cannot justly say that he tells of things foreign to the episode being related or to the larger action that fills the time span within which the episode is set, for there is no impropriety in his looking back and, to make the episode in question more intelligible, relating an earlier one or describing some city or other work of man no longer standing, or explaining a custom or social usage long since abandoned, or, looking forward, warning those concerned of the consequences of the actions being told. Such descriptions, examples, and warnings are not constituents of the principal action and are not its causes; they are ancillary to it and serve only to make some parts of it better known and understood. Hence, as we have already said, Homer's subject in the *Iliad* is the wrath of Achilles and not the Trojan war, or at least it is only that part of the Trojan war which coincides with the duration of Achilles's wrath, and he develops his plot by preserving the natural order of the episodes, the very order, that is, preserved by historians in their histories, by beginning at the beginning and without omitting the middle proceeding to the end.

Further, the subject of the *Odyssey* is not, as is commonly believed, Ulysses' voyage from Troy to Ithaca but his return home from Calypso's island, and the story is told in its natural order. Again, in the *Aeneid* Virgil tells of Aeneas' coming to Italy not from Troy but from Sicily, and he too tells his story in its strictly natural order. Nor let anyone believe that the prologue of the *Odyssey*, where the poet seems to beg the Muse to sing Ulysses' wanderings from the capture of Troy, contradicts what we have just said; for in the closing line of that passage Homer modifies his prayer and begs the Muse to tell the story from whatever point she chooses.⁴ Nor, again, let anyone believe that the prologue of the *Aeneid*, though it contains rather more details than seem necessary, declares Virgil's intention to relate Aeneas' whole voyage from Troy to Italy. His intention is to relate only the part of the voyage that we have mentioned, for if we regard everything he speaks of in those lines as part of his subject, we shall be obliged to say that his intention was to sing not only the wanderings of Aeneas but the kingdom of the Albans and the dominion of the Romans. The reason he elaborates as he does is to glorify Aeneas and his exploits, which are the real subject of the poem.

We cannot therefore admit that a plot is to be condemned if its beginning

is dependent upon something that precedes it, or its end is or may reasonably be followed by something else. For assuming that Ulysses' departure from Calypso's island is the beginning of the *Odyssey*, does not that beginning depend upon an earlier fact? Will not the reader desire to know what fortune or misfortune had cast Aeneas on those shores? And if we agree with Aristotle that the *Iliad* recounts only a part of the Trojan war, is not its beginning bound by necessity to antecedent actions? And how can we say that nothing can or ought to follow the end of the *Iliad* when we know that some things actually did follow it? Hence a poet undertaking to fashion a plot should take no account of which part is the beginning, which the middle, and which the end of the action of which the plot will be formed; he should, rather, take a whole action or a large or small part of a longer one and then consider with great care if it is of a kind to produce the effect he contemplates, which is to give an audience pleasure by means of a narrative which represents an action under fortune's sway that has never happened but is recognized as possible. Having done that he will begin the story at the point better suited than any other to produce the desired effect and will not prolong it beyond the point where it will cease to give the maximum pleasure. He must bear in mind, however, that the beginning is to be recognized as such by what is told early in the poem or later. And since what is told at the beginning of the poem or later is a part of the poem and stands within and not outside it, we may say that the beginning, whether or not identified as such from the first, is not dependent on anything outside the poem, seeing that there is no need to go outside the poem to identify it; and the middle and the end are likewise to be identified through the things told in the poem itself. An example of a beginning that may be recognized as such from the opening passage in the poem is to be found in the *Iliad*; the beginning of the *Odyssey* is of the other type, unrecognized until we have read far into the poem. In the *Iliad* we recognize at once that the flaring up of Achilles' wrath is the beginning of the poem by what is told about the plague and its cause, which is Agamemnon's contemptuous refusal of Chryses' petition. In the *Odyssey* Ulysses' departure from Calypso's island is not at once recognized to be the beginning of the poem, nor is it fully recognized to be such until he relates how he came there in the recital of his wanderings at the court of Alcinoüs.

We have discussed the various ways in which a poet may cast light on some part of his poem the import of which is obscure and is to be clarified by reference to past or future things. They are four in number. (1) The poet may introduce gods, oracles, ghosts, angels, demons, prophecies, divinations, visions, and other supernatural agents and devices; and because they are supernatural they are not to be employed unless the information they bring is of paramount importance and cannot be easily secured by other means. (2) He may introduce messengers, servants, or other persons of their kind who come from some place outside the scene of the action to bring news either that it may simply be known by some one or that it may be the cause to him of joy or sorrow. Such persons, who may collectively be given the Latin designation of *officiosi*, are never as a rule introduced except in situations of critical im-

portance. (3) He may have his characters supply the necessary information by having them refer incidentally to matters outside the limits of the plot. This method is highly commendable and may be employed whether the information is of great or slight importance. The three methods so far described may be employed indifferently in both dramatic and narrative poetry. (4) The fourth and last is employable only in narrative poetry, where to make present things fully intelligible the author may turn back to an earlier or move forward to a later point in the narrative so as to tell in his own words of something that has already occurred or will occur in the future.

These methods are all employed, as we have seen, to acquaint us with what is past or is to come. But they may also be employed to gain the knowledge of such things occurring in the present as would remain unknown to us because they occur at some distance from the scene where the action of the drama or of the narrative poem is unfolding. These matters Aristotle will consider on a later page.

* * * * *

[1.244] Aristotle now (8. 51a 31-35) adds a few words to what he has already said about the first requirement of the tragic plot. The idea which has just occurred to him concerns the method whereby we may tell when the parts are or are not essential to a whole. They are essential, he says, when their transposal or withdrawal transforms the whole, or, if it does not transform it, mutilates it, rendering it less than complete. Offering no proof of the soundness of transposing parts as a method for ascertaining their indispensability to a whole, he proves only that that purpose can be satisfactorily served by withdrawing one or more of its parts, saying, "A part the presence or absence of which has no noticeable effect on a whole is not truly a part of that whole." Hence a part may be recognized as essential to the whole when its withdrawal effects the transformation or mutilation of that whole.

We could give many examples of the manner in which the transposal of parts is made, but we will give only two, and they will clearly show how great the effect of this transposal is upon the work as a whole. (1) The plan of action rather than the action itself is given the more extensive treatment. Let us suppose that a poet is telling the story of the rape of the Sabine women. He first tells how Romulus is forbidden by a neighboring nation to choose wives for himself and his followers from among their women and how he devises a plan whereby he may circumvent their prohibition. Saying nothing of the plan itself, the poet proceeds to tell how Romulus arranged a solemn festival to which he invited both the men of the nation in question and their women and how at an appointed signal the women were carried off by the Romans. Now if the poet had instead devoted a great deal of space to an exposition of Romulus' plan, and when he came to its execution had said briefly, "And thus the plan was executed exactly as Romulus had conceived it," we could see how great would be the difference in the two treatments of the story, a difference due to the transposal of parts, the longer part being in the second version devoted

to the devising of Romulus' plan rather than to its execution, and see also how much more delightful the first version would be than the second. And the reason is obvious. Once the plan has been disclosed in detail we cease to look for new developments, whereas if it is kept from us we are surprised by the unforeseen action of the Romans at the same time that the neighbors are surprised by the unexpected injury, and we are moved by pity or some other rational emotion, from which we derive intense pleasure. (2) A speech addressed to one audience is transposed to another scene, where it is addressed to a different audience. If Aeneas' recital of his wanderings were delivered before Acestes in Sicily or Evander in Italy it would lose much of its present effectiveness, which it owes to the fact that it is addressed to Dido, who being a widow and universally admired for her chastity could not credibly have become enamored of Aeneas through less than his magnificent account of his many wanderings and of the many adventures which only his high valor could have brought to a triumphant close.

The withdrawal of some part of a poem may not damage or transform the whole. An example of this is the episode in the *Aeneid* (9. 107ff.) in which the ships are metamorphosed into nymphs when Turnus threatens to destroy them with fire. The withdrawal of this episode would produce no perceptible effect; the *Aeneid* as a whole would be as beautiful without it as it is now. On the other hand if we withdrew the story of Aeneas' wanderings together with that of Dido's love, the poem as a whole would not, to be sure, be transformed into something it was not before, but it would nevertheless be left disfigured and would be less than whole for having lost a very considerable segment of the plot.

5b

It Must Have Magnitude

[I.217] Aristotle has shown that the plot must be a whole. He next (7. 50b 34–51a 15) undertakes to show that it must have magnitude and goes on to specify what that magnitude shall be. Now we shall never fully understand certain ideas upon which his argument is grounded unless we bear in mind that no work of nature is acceptable as beautiful unless it is of a certain magnitude. An animal, for instance, is not beautiful unless it is of the proper size, i.e., of the size most often met in members of its own species. Hence we consider a man beautiful as regards his stature if he has attained the perfect stature for men; if he exceeds it by much he could be regarded as a monstrosity, which is how men regard the giants, whom no one admires for their beauty because of their huge bulk. But in the artistic imitations of nature's works we never judge a representation to be less beautiful because it is larger or smaller than its original; paintings and sculptures, for instance, are not judged to be more or less beautiful because they represent their originals as larger or smaller than the norms for their species. That is so because a man

represented as larger or smaller than life will regularly be restored to normal stature by the judgment of the beholder, for whatever his size he is the norm to which all other animals or objects—be they houses, trees, dogs, horses—are scaled, retaining their true proportions in relation to actual men of normal stature. Hence in painting and kindred arts especially we have a verification of the maxim that man is the measure of all things.

Several factors operate to produce paintings and statues of more than normal size. One of them is distance. Painted and sculptured figures destined to be placed at some distance from the eye should be made large enough to be clearly seen, as clearly as things we daily see at a normal distance in their normal state. In the column raised in Trajan's honor in his forum in Rome the figures carved near its top appear to the beholder on the ground to be of the same size as those in the middle or near the base. Yet they are actually larger, though the increase in size from level to level is so gradual that the eye cannot perceive it, and we judge them to be all of the same dimensions. The second factor is the desire of painters and sculptors to display the excellence of their art. Faults in execution are not as clear to the eye in small paintings and sculptures as they are in large, where every slight lapse from excellence is clearly discernible. Hence poor artists produce small works, whereas good artists, who are conscious of their sufficiency and confident of their skill, produce works of large dimensions, knowing that no one will find fault with any part of them. Such an artist, as we have already said, is Michelangelo, and one of the praiseworthy features of his works is that they are on so large a scale that they could not conceal even their slightest imperfections. For a thing is truly beautiful when, while displaying no ugliness, it would do so if the ugliness were there; and it is truly ugly when it seems beautiful because for one reason or another its ugliness remains imperceptible. There may also be a third factor that makes for colossal figures: painters and sculptors contemplate the authority and majesty rather than the stature of their subjects. There are in Rome a number of colossal marble statues of the Emperor Constantine, who was a man of mean stature; and Phidias made at Pisa an ivory statue of Olympian Jove so huge that the temple could not have contained it if the god had been represented standing. Obviously neither Phidias nor the sculptors who made the statues of Constantine thought that figures of ordinary size would have worthily represented the authority and the majesty of so great an emperor and so great a god. As regards their size, then, we have two different standards for judging the beauty of natural objects and that of representations of them by painting and kindred arts: to be beautiful, works of nature must be neither larger nor smaller than the size proper to their species, whereas artistic representations of them may be larger or smaller than they are in nature or of equal size, though for several reasons artists prefer to represent them as larger.

Let us now investigate the proper magnitude of poetic plots. A plot may be considered in two ways, as something that may be apprehended by the intellect alone, without the aid of the media that convey it to the senses, and again as something conveyed to the senses by the media of imitation, and to

be apprehended by both sight and hearing, or by the hearing only. The magnitude of a plot may be considered in the same two ways. Reserving consideration of the magnitude of plots of the first type to a later page, we observe that the magnitude of the plots that are apprehended by both sight and hearing should be equal to that of an actual event worthy of being recorded by history; for since the imaginary action from which the plot is formed represents words directly with words and things with things, it must of necessity fill as many hours on the stage as the imaginary action it represents would have filled or would fill in the world if it had actually occurred or were to occur there. Hence we may say that the magnitude of an imaginary plot considered as something that can be apprehended by the senses should equal that of the event it represents, and that it stands in the same relation to that event as, say, a portrait to its original when the latter's dimensions are preserved. Now a plot that is apprehended by sight and hearing must not exceed twelve hours, as we have argued elsewhere in support of Aristotle. This limitation holds for both tragic and comic plots. But the magnitude of the plot that is apprehended by the hearing only does not conform to that of the event it represents, nor is there a single measuring rod that can be applied to both; for narrative plots disregard the time element in the events they represent, and any of their episodes may be of longer or shorter duration than its historical counterpart. (This would seem to be true of dithyrambic poetry as well, at least in so far as it employs language as a medium.) It is of longer duration when the treatment of its subject is particularized and detailed; of shorter duration when it is generalized and succinct. The longer plot may be compared to a portrait that is larger than life and the shorter to one that is of the same dimensions.

As painters and sculptors represent their subjects as larger than their normal size for three reasons, so epic poets expand their plots for three more or less similar reasons. (1) Painters and sculptors magnify their figures to render them visible from a distance. Poets expand their plots so that they may be apprehended by the minds of the common people, which are far from able to grasp things succinctly stated and apprehend only plots of more than minimal length. Homer, for example, devotes many lines (*Il.* 4. 105ff.) to the drawing of Pandarus' bow and many more (*Il.* 18. 468ff.) to the arming of Achilles, the many distinct particulars magnifying and thereby making accessible to the rude multitude what would have escaped them had either episode been treated succinctly in general terms. (2) Artists produce large figures to win glory by boldly displaying the excellence of their art, knowing that critics would find it easier to perceive imperfections in larger than in smaller works. Epic poets who are conscious of their great worth compose long, detailed episodes as Homer did. Virgil, on the other hand, who must have been conscious of the feebleness of his genius, exerted himself to the utmost to avoid Homer's method. And as Homer is for this more than for any other reason to be ranked above Virgil, so Dante is to be ranked above Petrarch; for Dante composed a particularized poem on a grand scale that cannot conceal any defects it may contain, whereas Petrarch wrote sonnets, epigrams, and other short pieces that are like miniatures in that their imperfections however great are not easily

discernible. And it is a fact that, having won great glory for his sonnets and other short poems, Petrarch could not escape censure when he ventured to essay the longer poem and composed his *Trionfi* in terza rima. (3) Painters and sculptors produce great figures when they contemplate the authority and majesty rather than the stature of the men or gods they represent. Epic poets follow the same practice when they express their gratitude to or hymn the praises of public personages or gods, for they then do so at greater length than they would if though occasioned by like causes their sentiments had been addressed to private persons. For public personages embody the dignity of whole nations and must consequently be addressed at length and in the manner reserved for matters of great moment. This principle was perfectly observed though in prose by Cicero when he rendered thanks to Julius Caesar for recalling Marcus Marcellus from banishment, as well as by Pliny the Younger and Ausonius in rendering thanks to Trajan and Gratian respectively. It was perhaps not so well observed by Martial, who regularly expressed his gratitude to Domitian in brief epigrams.¹

Now just as the plot that is apprehended by sight and hearing should not, as we have shown, exceed twelve hours, so the plot that is apprehended by the hearing only should keep within the same limits. For what man could read a poem or listen to it for longer than twelve hours? In this respect the two plots are identical, but they differ in that the former ends in twelve hours and has no sequel whereas the latter is not constrained to end conclusively within that time. What is required of it is that none of its parts should consume more than twelve hours in the telling, though nothing forbids it to offer another part of equal length on another day and to continue in that fashion until the whole action has been told. That being so, epic poets initiated the practice of dividing their poems into books, each of a length to recite in a single day, there being no compelling reason why the whole poem should be recited in one day, since epic poetry can reach its public without the help of stage or actors or anything else that entails expense, and it is no offense against its nature to allow several days to elapse between the recitation of one part of a poem and another....

* * * * *

[1.223] Aristotle is of the opinion that the plot should be of a magnitude to be easily retained in the memory. To prove his point or merely to make it clear he employs an analogy, saying (7. 50b 38-51a 6) that the length of a plot stands in the same relation to the memory as the size of an animal to the eye. If an animal is of enormous size it cannot be perceived in its entirety at a single glance; if unduly small it strains the eye and is perceived as a blur. Just so, if a plot is extremely long the memory will fail to retain it in its entirety; if extremely short it will, to carry out the analogy, strain the memory and render it incapable of embracing it. All of which is untrue, for it is much easier to see small objects than large ones and to retain their images in the memory, and the same holds true for short and long poems. What is more, an animal

of enormous size does not stand in exactly the same relation to the eye as a long plot does to the memory, for an animal that cannot be perceived in its entirety at a glance can be perceived in two or more almost at the same moment, which is all the time the eye needs to do its work; but if a plot is too long to be apprehended in a moment it cannot be apprehended instantaneously in several; the process requires time, for the mind apprehends the parts one by one. Hence the analogy would perhaps have been more illuminating if Aristotle had said that just as natural objects, like animals of enormous size, cannot be perceived at a glance when close to the eye, the visual rays being then unable to embrace the whole, but may be so perceived if placed at some distance from the eye and slightly above it, when the said rays may spread out and thus embrace the whole body, however great its size, in one instant, so a long plot, which is by nature difficult to remember, may by the use of the proper skills be divided into distinct parts which may then be recombined into equally distinct parts and so ordered that every ordinary memory will be able to remember it with very great delight; and again that just as unduly small objects so strain the eye that they cannot be well perceived unless, like precious stones such as the carbuncle, which appears to be larger than it is thanks to its brilliance, they possess some property that makes them appear larger than they are, so a short plot, which would ordinarily be despised for its brevity and cast out by the memory as insignificant, is made both significant and memorable by some element not of its essence, as by some singular novelty of incident or style.

* * * * *

[1.225] In a later passage Aristotle will say that the plot must have unity, i.e., that it must be the representation of not more than one action of one man and that the action must be neither too long nor too short. In this passage devoted to the magnitude of the plot he says (7. 51a 1-2) that the mind cannot apprehend more than one plot that is neither too long nor too short for the same reason that the eye is incapable of taking in at a glance more than one animal that is neither too large nor too small, which is that if the animal is too large "the beholder's vision will not apprehend it as one and as a whole," so that what it sees is not the whole animal but only a part of it. It is true, of course, that the eye may perceive the animal one part at a time, but then the resulting pleasure will not be as great as when it takes it in at a glance nor will the discrete mental images make possible a sound judgment of the animal's beauty, for there will be no way of knowing whether each of its parts is of the right dimension to harmonize with the rest. In like manner, in judging whether a plot is or is not properly made one cannot derive any pleasure from it unless one can bring the whole of it to mind at one time, for the various parts of a story are interdependent, and one part is made beautiful or ugly by another, and in the end all of them together make the story as a whole beautiful or ugly. Hence to be fully enjoyed the whole of an animal must be perceived at a glance and the whole of a plot must be contemplated in one instant; but

if either because of its great dimensions or for some other reason we perceive only one part of the animal or fail to perceive it altogether, we shall then feel little pleasure or none whatever, and the same holds true when the object of our contemplations is an epic poem or a drama.

Now I do not know whether Aristotle believes that the eye can perceive only one object out of many at any one moment, yet his analogy is so worded that some such belief may be legitimately attributed to him. But that belief is perhaps unfounded. For the bodily eye and the mental eye seem somehow to be endowed with one and the same faculty: they can both combine separate and distinct objects and make one thing out of many, and they can break up a single object into its component parts and make many things out of one. A man standing on a hill top sees an army on a plain below him as a unit, his eye combining its many distinct components—men, horses, pavilions, tents, spears, swords, cuirasses, helmets, and the rest—into one object and perceiving it in its entirety at a glance. On the other hand in regarding a woman, for example, one may see not her whole body but only a number of its constituent parts, and even fix one's gaze upon one of them, such as a little mole or a lock of hair, disregarding the rest. In like manner the mind's eye sees and contemplates as a single object the species man or horse or other animal, each of which is a composite of innumerable individuals, while its analytical operations can distinguish into its component parts things that are by nature one and inseparable, contemplating one of them as if it were independent from the rest, as, for instance, substance stripped of its accidents or accidents separated from their substances....

* * * * *

[1.227] Aristotle now (7. 51a 6-9) speaks of the length of dramatic plots in so far as they are apprehended by sight and hearing, saying that "it is no concern of the art of tragedy." This point he proves thus. Matters not considered by an artist in the practice of his art are not within the province of that art. Dramatic plots, considered as things seen and heard, are composed without regard to the measurable time it will take to perform them. Hence the length of a tragedy so considered is not the proper concern of the tragic poet's art. Against any who would deny this conclusion Aristotle directs the following argument. Works which are performed with strict regard to time are performed by the clock. Tragedy is not. Therefore tragedy does not concern itself with time. Yet it may not be unreasonable to doubt that the length of the plot as a thing perceived by the senses, plot in its external aspect, is no concern of the tragic or comic poet's art. In fact Aristotle seems here to contradict his own dictum that a tragic action must not extend beyond a single revolution of the sun, i.e., twelve hours, which is a measurable period of time; for a tragedy considered as a piece destined for the stage is bound to observe limits peculiar to itself: its performance, as I have already demonstrated, must not exceed twelve hours and yet must not be so short that the public will resent having been lured to the theatre with great inconvenience to itself for only

one hour or even two. And though the time within which a tragedy must begin and end, unlike the time limit which it must not exceed, has never been precisely determined, so that tragic performances need not be measured by the clock, it does not follow that the length of a tragedy therefore stands outside the domain of the art of poetry and that poets who cavalierly lengthen their tragedies beyond twelve hours are not to be charged with an offense against their art, the very offense for which we withhold our praise from Plautus, who in one of his comedies extends the action beyond the established limits.² On the other hand we cannot exempt from blame poets who do not develop their plots to a legitimate length, cutting them short before the lapse of the required time, as at the end of only two or more hours. The proper reply to Aristotle, then, is that it is not all works which take time into account that are executed with constant reference to the clock, but only those for which a time limit has been set, which they must neither fall short of nor exceed. Tragedy does not fall into this category, for the tragic poet has ample time in which to bring the action to its close, and it is not easy for him to fall into error even though the hours are not measured with the utmost precision by the clock....

* * * * *

[1.229] Having, as he believes, proved that it is impossible to ascertain the proper length of a plot in so far as it is apprehended by the senses of sight and hearing, Aristotle now (7. 51a 9-15) attempts to determine its proper length in so far as it is apprehended by the mind and stored in the memory. In his view there are two determinants of length: the terminus toward which the tragic matter that constitutes the plot moves and the capacity of the audience's memory. The tragic matter reaches its terminus when the reversal from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness has been completed. The capacity of an audience's memory is the maximum number of things it can retain with ease. Aristotle has observed that tragic plots commonly came to the end when a reversal had been effected from happiness to misery or vice versa, and that the action represented in any plot never lasted longer than the time of the sun's daily course above our hemisphere, i.e., twelve hours. Not perceiving the true reason for that limit, he imagined that it was due to the limited capacity and retentiveness of the audience's memory, to the fact that if the plot told an action extending over many days, the audience would have forgotten the first episodes by the time they witnessed the last, having failed to consider that if tragic plots had really been restricted to a few hours for the reason he imagines, epic actions should have been subjected to the same restriction, for they regularly extend over many days and in fact over many years. And indeed he himself will soon observe that the *Odyssey* contains many actions which nevertheless combine to form a single action, the return of Ulysses from Troy to Ithaca. Yet those who read or hear epic poems cannot in the nature of things retain the memory of what they have read or heard more firmly than audiences do tragic actions that they have both seen and heard. Actually they

are at a disadvantage, for the images of things that enter the mind through both eyes and ears implant themselves in the memory and strike deeper roots than those that enter it through the ears alone. Hence Horace (*Ars Poet.* 180-81) says:

Minds are stirred less powerfully by what they receive
 through the ear
 Than by what is set before the trusty eyes.

Moreover Aristotle might well have considered that the affairs portrayed in tragedy do not differ from those we witness daily in the life of the world, and that they consequently are not so great a burden on the memory that they would be forgotten if we witnessed more of them than are contained in a tragedy of the prescribed length. The feebleness of the human memory is not, therefore, the cause of the strict limits imposed on tragedy. The real cause we have already given: it is that the time required for the performance of a tragedy equals that which would be required if the tragic action actually occurred in the world, and that an audience cannot remain in the theatre without intolerable discomfort for longer than twelve hours.

5c

It Must Have Unity

[1.233] The third requirement of the plot is that it have unity. A plot, Aristotle asserts (8. 51a 16-35), may be said to have unity if it consists of a single action of a single person¹ and not all the actions of one person's life. This contradicts the opinion held by some that a plot may be said to have unity if it simply relates the actions of a single person, which assumes that the unity of the plot results from its having a single hero and not a single action. The statement of this requirement gives Aristotle the occasion for censuring poets who, holding an erroneous opinion of the matter, composed a *Herculeid* or a *Theseid*, that is, poems relating all the actions of Hercules or Theseus, and for praising Homer, whose *Iliad* and *Odyssey* each contains a single action. Not content with having proved his point by invoking the authority of Homer, he seeks to reinforce his proof by invoking theory, saying that just as in the other imitative arts the imitation is one if its object is a single thing, so in poetry if the plot, which is the imitation of an action, has unity, it follows that the action it imitates is a single action. Finally he says that the plot represents a whole action, and this leads him to speak of the disposition of the parts, showing how we may ascertain whether they are in the proper order and whether any one of them is or is not indispensable to the whole. These last observations, like much else in the *Poetics*, are out of their proper order, for they hark back to the first requirement of the plot, that it must be a whole, and should have been incorporated in the discussion of that requirement.

Before proceeding further we might consider for a moment the significance of Aristotle's choice of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to prove that a plot should not contain more than a single action. These two poems are epics, not tragedies, though the subject under discussion is still tragedy. But if Aristotle feels free to set up epic plots as models of what the tragic plot should be, we may legitimately infer that what he has to say about tragic plots is for the most part applicable to the plots of epic poetry, and is verifiable in them, and is almost wholly applicable to the plots of comedy, especially of the New Comedy, and equally verifiable in them. Hence as far as the construction of the plot is concerned Socrates is right in asserting, as he does toward the end of Plato's *Symposium* (223), that tragedy and comedy are products of one and the same art.

Now what Aristotle has to say about the unity of the plot and consequently about the unity of the action must be considered and interpreted with sobriety. Every tragedy and comedy that is well constructed and capable of giving great pleasure contains not one action but two, and the two actions seem sometimes not to have the probable or necessary dependence upon each other that they could have, so much so that it might perhaps be possible to stage them separately. On the other hand one of the two actions seems to be the principal one, and the function of the second and subsidiary plot seems to be to enhance the happiness or unhappiness in the first. One might offer many examples in proof of this, but we will offer only two: the *Hercules Furens* of Euripides or Seneca for tragedy, and the *Andria* of Terence for comedy. No one is so blind as not to see that the *Hercules Furens* contains two actions. In one of them Hercules slays Lycus, the tyrant of Thebes, to avenge the injury Lycus had done to Megara, Hercules' wife, during Hercules' absence from his country; in the other he slays his wife and children after he has been bereft of his reason by Juno. There is no probable or necessary connection between the two, so that the tragedy obviously lacks the strict unity of action which Aristotle seems to require. The *Andria* of Terence also contains two actions. One of them relates the love of Pamphilus for Glycerium (or Pasibula, as her real name was), the other the love of Charinus for Philumena, and both have a happy ending. There is no probable or necessary connection between the two, though each of them is a probable action....

* * * * *

[1.239] Aristotle makes it clear, then, that a tragedy, a comedy, or an epic poem should contain a single plot, and that the plot should contain a single action of a single person. If we accept this opinion we shall be obliged to condemn Statius, who wrote or, rather, proposed to write the whole life-story of Achilles in an *Achilleis*; Nonnus, who told all the actions of Bacchus in a single poem; and Girolamo Vida, who in his *Christiad* relates the many miraculous actions of Christ, all of these poets being of one kind with the poets condemned by Aristotle as the authors of a *Herculeid* or a *Theseid*. Nor shall we be able to commend the plot of the *Iliad*, which though a single ac-

tion or, as Aristotle would have it, a part of a single action, that is, a part of the Trojan war, is not about a single person but about a whole people; for that war was fought as a common enterprise by the princes of Greece, who were bound by oath to Tyndareus, Helen's father, to rescue Helen by force of arms if she should ever be abducted. In like manner we shall have to condemn the plot of Statius' *Thebais*, which though it contains a single action does not relate the action of a single person, i.e., of the sole instigator of the war, but of seven kings, which explains why Aeschylus gave his tragedy on that subject the title of *The Seven Against Thebes*. And so much the less shall we be able to accept as well constructed any plot which contains not a number of actions of one person or a single action of many persons, but a number of actions of a number of persons, such plots, for instance, as are found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

If we are to arrive at the whole truth of this matter we must bear in mind that, as we have already said, poetry is the imitation of history and follows in its footsteps, deviating from it in its use of metre and additionally only in its matter, which consists of possibilities that have never happened and not of such as are known to have happened. (This difference will be considered by Aristotle on a later page (9. 51a 36-38).) Hence if highly esteemed historians like Plutarch, Suetonius, Cornelius Nepos, and many others, both Greek and Roman, bring into one history a number of actions of a single person, there can be no doubt that poets may with impunity make plots modeled on their histories. In like manner poets cannot be censured for making plots out of the single action of a whole people, for historians like Sallust, who wrote the history of Rome's war against Jugurtha as a single work, are commended for writing histories of that pattern. Again, poets may legitimately relate not only a single action but a number of actions of a whole people, for that, as we know, has been done by Livy and many other Greek and Roman historians of universal renown. Finally, if poets should relate in a single poem the many actions of many persons or of many peoples, I do not see how they could be made the objects of censure, seeing that historians like Trogus Pompeius and many others have won praise for writing histories of that kind. Yet in spite of all this Aristotle here and elsewhere obstinately legislates that a plot should contain a single action of a single person, and that if it contains two, one of them must be dependent on the other,² offering nothing in justification of his law but the example of Homer and the tragic poets.

There is, however, a better reason why a plot should be of the kind which Aristotle prescribes, and he should have had no difficulty finding it. A tragic or comic plot should contain a single action, or two so interrelated that they may be accounted one, and of one person rather than of a whole people, not because it cannot by nature hold more, but because the limitations of time (twelve hours) and place under which tragedies and comedies are performed will not permit the representation of many actions or of a single action of a whole people, and quite frequently not even of the whole of a single action if it is somewhat long. This, not Aristotle's, is the principal and most compelling reason why tragic and comic plots should contain only a single action

of a single person or two actions that may be accounted one because of their interdependence.

It was not, however, because of any limitations of time and place that Homer narrated only one action of a single person in each of his epics, for an epic poem may contain a number of very long actions and need not limit itself to one country; it was because he believed that by restricting himself to one action and one hero he would make his plots more beautiful and himself the object of greater admiration. For when a poem relates a single action of a whole people, or a number of actions of one person or a number of persons, it does not strike us as wonderful that it should possess the power of delighting us and compelling our attention, for the plurality of actions that make up the plot, as well as its variety, its extraordinary incidents, and its numerous characters are in themselves sufficient to endow the poem with its pleasurable qualities, its magnitude, and its grandeur. In such narratives the plot alone produces almost the whole effect of the poem, and the poet's genius does not come through as a thing of any great excellence. When, however, a poet narrates only one action of one person — such an action as at first glance would seem incapable of compelling the soul to attend with pleasure — his poem, if successful, will give proof of his judgment and skill, for with that one action he has accomplished what others have difficulty accomplishing with many actions of many persons. That is why Homer is worthy of the highest praise; for with a minor episode in Achilles' life, an outburst of wrath, he succeeded in fashioning a plot as considerable as that of the *Iliad*, and with a single episode in Ulysses' life, his return to Ithaca from Calypso's island, in fashioning a second plot no less marvelous than the first. We are therefore obliged to conclude that a tragic or comic plot is compelled to limit itself to a single action of a single person or two interdependent actions by the limitations of time and place, whereas the epic poem will limit itself to a single action of a single person not to meet external requirements but so that the poet may give proof of his excellence. And if any poet holds a poor opinion of such excellence or, taking a just measure of his powers, concludes that he can never attain it, he will be free to make a plot of a number of actions of a single person, or a single action of a whole people, or a number of actions of a number of persons. In that case, however, he must be content with no more than moderate praise, conceding the summit of glory to the poet who succeeds in fashioning a satisfactory plot with the single action of a single person.

* * * * *

[1.242] Aristotle holds (8. 51a 22–24) that Homer gave proof of great sagacity when he fashioned the plot of the *Odyssey* out of a single action of a single person and that his sagacity proceeded from "art or nature," i.e., from the art taught him earlier by an unknown master or by Phemius, a man of learning in whose home he was reared and at whose feet he acquired a wealth of knowledge,³ or from the excellence of his nature and the acuteness of his discerning intellect. Aristotle, then, does not recognize poetic madness as the ground

of Homer's great sagacity, and if he recognizes no such madness in Homer so much less will he recognize it in any other poet. We may then repeat what we have already said, that Aristotle held poetic madness to be a mere fancy rooted in the gullibility of the vulgar herd.

* * * * *

[I.243] Aristotle also denies (8. 51a 24-30) that Homer brought "all that happened to Ulysses" into the *Odyssey*, and to prove this he asserts that Homer never mentions the wound inflicted above Ulysses' knee by the boar in the chase on Mount Parnassus. That assertion is shown to be erroneous by the *Odyssey* itself, where Homer tells of the wound in the nineteenth book (428ff.). If we are disinclined to charge Aristotle with a lapse of memory, we may interpret his words as a general observation that a poet cannot be said to have made an action the subject of any part of his poem if he has not made it its principal subject there, having introduced it only to cast necessary light on that subject. Thus the chase and the wound were described by Homer to explain the nature of the scar by which the old nurse recognized Ulysses, his principal subject all the while having been not the scar but the recognition....

* * * * *

[I.243] No one will deny that the images of things should be equal in number to the things imaged and no one but will assert that if the thing imaged is one, then the image should be one and that if the things imaged are more than one, the images should be more than one, and consequently that the plot, which is the image of the action, is simple or multiple according as it images one action or more than one. Nor will anyone deny that the action should be one. So far everyone will be of one mind with Aristotle (8. 51a 30-36). But those who believe that a plot may contain more than one action and still be unified will not accept his contention that there is one and only one way of fusing a number of actions into a unified plot, namely, by establishing a probable or necessary relationship among them. A poet or historian, for instance, may give his work unity by relating all the incidents to one person. This was the method followed by the poets of the *Herculeid* and the *Theseid*, whom Aristotle condemns, by Statius in his *Achilleis*, and by Vida in his *Christiad*. (Or he may relate the incidents to one nation. Virgil thought of following this second method when he proposed to himself to celebrate the exploits of the Romans according to one authority, or those of the kings of Alba according to another, an undertaking he later abandoned not because he thought the method unsound, but because he was dismayed by the harshness of the names he would have had to introduce into his lines.⁴ Again, he may relate only events of a single kind, a method not disdained by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* or by Valerius Maximus in his *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*. And there are still other methods. A number of actions may be considered to form a single action because they all occurred in one place or because they occurred within

the same period of time. Of these last two methods the first was followed by Raffaele Volaterrano and the second by Marcantonio Sabellico.⁵ But this is not the place for enumerating all the ways in which a number of actions may be reduced to unity....

5d

It Must Be Possible

[1.247] The fourth requirement of the plot is that it be possible (8. 51a 36–51b 26). It is well to note that this requirement is more important than any of the other seven or than all of them combined, for the quality of possibility in a plot is, as it were, its substance, the other qualities being its accidents or, again, its matter, which comes first by nature while the rest come after and attach themselves to it. In referring to the quality of possibility in poetry Aristotle makes use of two terms, "possible" or "what may happen" and "universal"; in referring to the quality of actuality in history he makes use of two corresponding terms, "what has happened" and "particular." Before we take the next step it will therefore be well for us to inquire into the meaning of both sets of corresponding terms.

"Possible" incidents, or incidents that "may happen," are to be divided into two classes, those that are possible and have happened and those that are possible and have never happened. The first comprises two types of incidents, the natural and the accidental. The natural are of two kinds, those that follow the usual course of nature and those that go counter to it. Examples of the first kind are that animals like man, the eagle, and the horse bring forth progeny of their own kind, that the vine produces grapes, and the pear tree pears. Examples of the second kind are prodigies or miracles that have happened before and may happen again. It once happened against nature, for instance, that the sun stood still to afford Joshua time to pursue the enemy (Josh. 10:12ff.), a miracle that Charles V's flatterers affirm was repeated on the day he took John Frederick, Duke of Saxony, captive.¹ Possibilities that occur and may occur within the usual course of nature may be considered in two ways. When we say that man may generate human offspring because we know that he has done so in the past, the word "man" may signify man in general, or an individual, i.e., a man like Agamemnon, who having begotten Iphigenia may beget Electra.

Accidents that may happen and have actually happened are likewise of two kinds, having materialized through the operations of fortune or of the human will, and both kinds may happen to types of persons or to individuals. Many identical accidents have happened through the operations of fortune to persons of the same type (many fathers whose children have strayed from home have found them by chance when they had least hope of doing so), and they have also happened more than once to one and the same person (Helen was twice abducted, once by Theseus and again by Paris). Many identical volitional

accidents have happened to persons of the same kind (many lovers have hanged themselves), and they have also been repeated by an individual (Jason deliberately and with considerable ingratitude deserted two women, first Hypsipyle and then Medea).²

Things that are possible but have never happened are of as many kinds as those that are possible and have happened. They may happen within the usual course of nature: the earth, for instance, might produce some new fruit, as it now produces fruits unknown to the ancients. Or they may happen against the usual course of nature: in his *Inferno* (25. 97ff.), for instance, Dante tells of something that had never happened, an exchange of forms between a man and a serpent; hence in introducing the episode he proclaims that it describes a metamorphosis never attempted by Ovid himself. In like manner it is possible that accidental occurrences unprecedented either in their singularity or their typicality may take place through the operations of fortune. Marguerite of Navarre tells as one of her true stories³ of a very strange and unprecedented misfortune that befell a nobleman of Provence who not many years ago unwittingly got his own mother with child and later married and had children by that same child, not knowing her to be his daughter. Finally accidents that have never happened may happen through the agency of the human will. It should be noted that if things that may happen but have never happened are to be acceptable as probable and credible, then they must be made to resemble some that are known to have happened at an earlier time or others that, though less likely to happen than they, yet have actually happened; and if these probabilities are unattainable then care should be taken that great or small parts of them should resemble great or small parts of incidents that are known to have happened to various persons. For example, it has happened to some son to sleep unwittingly with his mother or to some father to sleep unwittingly with his daughter; but it is improbable that the same person has slept both with his mother and with the daughter born of that union, having mistaken his mother for a stranger and his daughter for a woman he might lawfully marry. But if we grant that such an accident has happened, it could never have happened in the exact circumstances described in Marguerite of Navarre's story or in others like them. So much by way of clarification of Aristotle's first use of the pair of terms "possible" and "what may happen...."

The phrase "what has happened," corresponds to "possible" and "what may happen." Things that have happened, though possible, are yet never termed "possible"; whether natural events within or counter to the usual course of nature or the fortuitous works of fortune or the human will, they are always to be considered as "things that have happened." And since the events so considered are invariably associated with particular individuals, they may be thought of only as particular events and consequently as constituting the matter of history and not, except for a few of them to be discussed later, of poetry. (On the other hand, things that are possible but have never happened constitute the matter of poetry and not of history....

Let us now consider "the universal," the second term adopted by Aristotle for designating the possible. The term may have four distinct applications.

It may be applied (1) to the genus, which is a universal with respect to the distinct and particular species that compose it. "Vegetative, sensitive animal" is a universal comprising such species as ox, eagle, and sturgeon. (2) To a species, which may be considered a universal with respect to the innumerable individuals that compose it. "Man" comprises Orestes, Medea, Ulysses, and others. (3) To the whole, which may be termed a universal with respect to its many constituent parts. When we speak of the whole without mentioning its parts, as when we say "house" without mentioning its roof, walls, floor, and the rest, we may be said to be using a universal term. And because in so speaking we make one whole of many parts, our utterance is called an abridgment, a summary, or a reduction of many particulars to a single compendious term, this being especially so when we reduce many minor parts to one major one, which with respect to those many parts is a whole. (4) To the whole or to its parts. I am not here using the term whole, as I did under (3), to distinguish the whole of anything from its parts and to indicate that so distinguished it is more universal than its parts, which are particulars. The term here designates an incident known in summary form which may be said to possess the property of universality in so far as it may occur to many persons. Each part of such an incident may also be described as universal, but only in so far as it is possible for it to occur to many persons. Aristotle gives the term "universal" the fourth of these applications, and clearly intends it to be taken in exactly the same sense as "the possible" and "what may happen," all three of which terms designate the thing that constitutes the subject matter of poetry.

Corresponding to "universals" are "particulars," that is, the things that have happened to one particular person. Such occurrences are sometimes known in summary form, in the third sense of "universal" defined above. We may only know, for example, that Orestes slew his mother accompanied by Pylades and with his and Electra's help. Sometimes an occurrence is known in detail, as when we know precisely what Orestes said and did and precisely what courses he followed in slaying his mother. Particularized knowledge of this kind constitutes the matter of history, for in Aristotle the term "particulars" denotes no more and no less than "what has happened." It is therefore plain that "what has happened" and "particulars" signify the same thing....

* * * * *

[1.251] Its subject being what has happened, history need not contemplate either the probable or the necessary but only the true. Poetry, on the other hand, whose subject is the possible, establishes the possibility of what it represents by contemplating not the true but "the probable or the necessary" (9. 51a 39). If, for instance, a man with a wound in the head will probably die of it if he lives an irregular life, then death is for him a possibility, and the poet may without impropriety introduce it into his plot. Similarly, if a man with a wound in his heart must necessarily die of it, then death is for him too a possibility, and the poet may introduce it into his plot without impropriety. But possible incidents are not always the only kind found in a plot.

In my opinion, in fact, they are never the only kind found in the plots of tragedies and epic poems. The plots of these two types of poetry are always developed from something that has actually happened. It is comic plots that always exclude all types of incidents except those that are possible and have never happened. The plots of tragedy and epic poetry must of necessity be based upon incidents which we have classified as things happening to a particular person and are known only in summary form. The story of Orestes, who, accompanied by Pylades and with his and Electra's help, slew his mother, is a suitable one for tragedy and epic poetry, for though the matricide is a historical occurrence we lack all precise knowledge of how it was committed.

Why tragedy and epic poetry may legitimately share with history the recital of things that have actually happened is clear to the point of demonstration. The actions proper to tragedy and epic poetry cannot be simply human actions; they must be the magnificent actions of royal personages. And if they are such, it follows that they must be the known actions of kings who have lived and whom we know to have lived, for no poet may legitimately invent a king who never lived and attribute some action to him; and though he tells of a king who once lived and is known to have lived he may not legitimately attribute to him an action that was never his. No poet, for instance, may invent a Roman king named Julius and tell of him that he committed incest with his daughter, nor may he tell of Julius Caesar, permanent dictator of Rome, that he slew his wife Calpurnia for having found her in adultery; for pre-Republican Rome never knew a King Julius who was guilty of incest, and Julius Caesar never slew his wife because she had been guilty of adultery. Kings and their notable actions are known to us through history or oral tradition, and to invent kings with new names and to attribute new actions to known kings is to contradict both history and tradition and to offend against well-established truth. And in tragic and epic plots this is a greater offense than that against verisimilitude. Hence all plots fashioned by tragic and epic poets are and ought to be based upon events that can be called historical, though Aristotle is of different opinion for reasons which we shall soon show to be unsound, for it is only through history or oral tradition that those events are known.

But the events in question, whether known through history or oral tradition, must be known only in summary and universalized form, for it is only then that the poet is in the position to do the poet's work and to give proof of the inventiveness of his genius by devising the particular ways in which they might actually have occurred; if these particulars were as well known as the most salient elements of the story they would not form appropriate elements of the plot and would constitute matter for the historian and not the poet. The fact, however, that poets do not invent all the constituent elements of tragedies and epic poems as they do all those of comedies must not lead us to the false conclusion that poems of the former type are less difficult to produce than those of the latter. The reason for this will be considered presently.

The comic poet invents both the universal form of his plot and its particulars,

and since every detail of the whole is of his own invention and nothing that has actually happened is any part of it, he may without impropriety give and is in reason bound to give his characters names of his own choosing. These characters, who perform actions that have never happened, must be private persons, the kind of persons whose actions are quite unknown and are never transmitted to posterity by history or oral tradition. A poet who represents only actions and characters of this kind cannot be accused of falsifying either history or tradition. And if he wishes to be known as a true poet—as an inventor—he is bound to invent every constituent of his comedy, which he is in position to do since private characters and actions constitute his only matter. Let no one believe, however, that the comic poet is also at liberty to invent new cities or rivers or mountains or kingdoms or customs or laws, or to alter the usual course of nature and represent a snowfall in midsummer or a harvest in midwinter. If in elaborating his plot he finds it necessary to introduce things and phenomena of this sort, he must, like the tragic or the epic poet, refrain from doing violence to history and to truth.

* * * * *

[1.253] What distinguishes poetry from history is that the matter of poetry is the possible, i.e., things that may happen, whereas the matter of history is the true, i.e., things that have actually happened. That is the essential difference between the two and not, as some in Aristotle's time believed, that the one is written in prose and the other in verse. Of this distinction I have already spoken at length (I. 8), so that at this point I need only refer the reader to those pages and limit myself to a few additional remarks. Just as the work of Herodotus remains a history even if it is turned into verse, so the *Electra* of Sophocles remains a poem even if turned into prose. One may therefore go further and say that Lucian, Silius Italicus, and Girolamo Fracastoro in his *Joseph* are historians, and though they cannot be accepted and praised as poets they may be accepted and praised as historians, which is no small praise. On the other hand Lucian in many of his dialogues and Boccaccio in his *Decameron* and his *Filopono* are poets,⁴ and though they are not to be read and praised as historians, they are entitled to the greater glory of poets. Aristotle says that if Herodotus' history were turned into verse it would remain a history (9. 51b 2-3), thus confuting those who held metre to be the distinguishing mark of poetry. It is to be observed, however, that he never implies that that work would be as praiseworthy in verse as it is in prose. He seems to think, rather, that a versified Herodotus would be of little worth, for he has already voiced his disapproval of the mimes of Xenarchus and Sophron and the Socratic dialogues simply because though their matter is essentially poetic they are in prose. Hence it may be assumed that he would for that same reason condemn Lucian's dialogues and Boccaccio's *Decameron* and *Filopono*.

To prove that his own distinction between poetry and history is a sound one, Aristotle argues thus. Every art has its own matter, distinct from the matter of the other arts. The proper matter of history is things that have hap-

pened, and these remain the same whether expressed in prose or in verse. Hence since prose and verse cannot transmute one kind of matter into another, they do not constitute the essential difference between history and poetry. Aristotle might have gone further and proved his point by a second argument based on the matter of poetry. The matter of poetry, he might have said, is possibilities that have never happened, which remain the same whether expressed in prose or in verse. Hence since prose cannot transmute poetic matter into history nor verse historical matter into poetry, prose and verse do not constitute the essential difference between history and poetry. Yet metre is the proper vesture and adornment of poetry, and prose the proper vesture of history, and history cannot and should not with impunity be written in verse and poetry in prose any more than women can or should dress as men and men as women. The reason for this has already been given (I. 9). It should perhaps be added that a historical subject that has been treated by one historian may well be treated by another, and that if both works are faithful to the facts they both merit the name of history. Not so with poetry. Once a subject has been treated by one poet it cannot be treated by a second unless he transforms the particulars beyond recognition. If he fails to do this he is no poet, for he has invented nothing and thus has shirked the labor of invention. We shall have more to say about this further down.

* * * * *

[1.255] From the foregoing considerations Aristotle draws the conclusion (9. 51b 5-6) that "poetry is more than history a thing for the philosopher and one duly exercised in intellectual pursuits."⁵ For if the proper matter of history is things that have happened, then the writing of history does not require the prolonged labors of a discerning genius to invent them,⁶ since the actions it relates have actually happened and are supplied it by the course of human affairs; to understand them, since they are not by nature recondite and are accessible to sense; or to arrange them, since they possess their own natural order. But the things that may happen and have never happened, which form the matter of poetry, cannot be brought into being without the strenuous exercise of the intellect and great discernment,⁷ for the poet must not only invent and understand what has never happened and yet may happen to particular persons in accordance with the requirements of versimilitude or necessity, but must also arrange the parts of his invention in the proper order. In tragedy and comedy especially the strict limitations of time and place call for the exercise of great skill in the disposition of the parts. Yet Aristotle here speaks only of the greater difficulty of inventing the matter of the poem, remaining silent on the task of understanding that matter and arranging its parts in the proper order....⁸

* * * * *

[1.279] Aristotle concedes that though the natural matter of poetry is not what has happened but what may happen, yet poetry may sometimes, i.e., when

a possible action is not credible, take a historical action for its subject. That being so, we should perhaps inquire if history, whose natural matter is what has happened, may sometimes deal with what may happen. And though we have already considered at sufficient length the kinds of poems that may tell of things that have happened and the extent to which they may do so (III.5d, 1.251), we shall nevertheless now reopen that question so that we may have a parallel to our consideration of whether history may legitimately deal with the possible, i.e., with what may happen. Let us imagine two vast fields, one of which may be called the field of fact, the other that of fiction.⁹ The field of fact is the field of history, that of fiction the field of poetry. But the field of fact contains areas of fiction and that of fiction even greater areas of fact. I call "field of fact" what Aristotle calls "things that have happened" or "particular things," and "field of fiction" what he calls "things that may happen" or "universal things." "Universal things" are so called because they may happen to everyone but have not yet happened to anyone. Because they have happened to no one and may happen to anyone, they are fictitious, and we do not know whether they are more likely to happen to one person than to another. Particular things that have happened are facts, and of them we know not only that they have happened, but that they have happened to a given person. Facts are obviously, as Aristotle affirms, the matter of history. But because they may be transformed into fictions at will by any writer and because, when witnesses are lacking and the records are incomplete and untrustworthy, they sometimes contain an admixture of fiction, we shall now inquire whether a historian can or should transform facts into fictions and what duty demands of him when he comes face to face with a fiction.

The historian must zealously guard against transforming established fact into fiction to lend his narrative charm and render it more pleasing, as he may do by adding to or subtracting from or transforming the known truth, and producing a recital of things that may happen rather than an account of things that have happened. This is a grave offense against the essence of history and one that we do not and cannot pardon, as we legitimately may those slighter ones that affect only such of its elements as form no part of its essence: the ill-ordering of the matter, for instance, and the introduction into the narrative of superfluities or matters too trivial to merit a historian's consideration. On the other hand if the matter under investigation presents the historian with fictions which he cannot ignore, he may, taking due notice of the possible and the probable, combine fiction with fact and juxtapose what may happen with what has happened. When he does so, however, he is under stern obligation to distinguish in unmistakable language the possible from the actual so that the reader may not fall into the deception of mistaking the one for the other. For when a historian fobs off a fiction as fact and, with no clear forewarning that he has abandoned the province of the actual, tells of possible and probable occurrences as if they had actually happened, he is guilty of grave error and offends against the essence of history. This is the error which historians commonly fall into when they invent orations for historical personages, a department of historiography in which they take great pleasure,

offering them, as it does, the opportunity to strut in their most gorgeous plumage, for here as nowhere else they can exercise to the full their genius for adorning fine thoughts with pompously ornate language. For without so much as a word of warning that such-and-such a general or such-and-such a senator may not in fact have spoken publicly at a particular time and place, but assuming that he did because he may or should have, they put a speech into his mouth with all the assurance of men relying upon authoritative testimony and go on to assert without blushing that he is indeed the author of the very speech they had just fabricated, which is not only untrue and improbable but impossible, for more often than not the orators are but ignorant dolts, while their orations display an artistry so refined that it could not be excelled by Demosthenes himself. They also offend against history when they describe the capture of a city or a storm at sea, on which occasions they disregard all or almost all the facts and describe only what in the circumstances usually happens or may happen. To put it briefly, they may be said to offend against history in almost all descriptions of the kind known as hypotyposes.

Fictions, still according to Aristotle, constitute the poet's matter, and they are to be narrated or presented on the stage as things that have happened, with never a sign that they are the productions of the poet's imagination; and, in fact, to allay all suspicion that they are, the epic poet may invoke the Muses, deities charged with preserving the memory of things past or hidden from human view, to bring to his mind what it seems impossible that he could know. For this reason I cannot but wonder now as I have before this where the Romans could have found the kind of prologues which they put at the head of their comedies and in which they expound the argument of the plot about to come upon the stage, thus completely invalidating its versimilitude and announcing that its matter is a figment of their imagination. But I must wonder even more at those poets of our own time who have adopted prologues of the same kind for their tragedies, for the tragic plot by its very nature needs no announcement of its argument since it is already known to the audience in summary form through history or oral tradition. For this reason, too, we must withhold our praise from poets who in recounting possible fictions render them less credible and at the same time betray them as mere inventions by employing such expressions as "This is probably how the thing came to pass," "It is said," and "This is what rude antiquity believes." These expressions sit well on the lips of the historian when disclosing that he is trespassing the bounds of fact, but they are unsuited to the poet, whose greatest praise is that he employs every means at his command to give fiction the appearance of fact. Hence I fail to see how one could commend Boccaccio, who by putting expressions like "If we may believe what some Genoese say" in the mouths of his narrators, tends sometimes to weaken the reader's belief in the stories they tell. Nor can I understand how anyone could commend Petrarch for introducing the clause "it is written" in the lines (*Canz.* 135)

Another fountain hath Epirus,
Of which it is written that though cold

Yet it will kindle every flameless torch,

for the qualification destroys all faith in the natural miracle described and undermines the validity of the metaphor in the succeeding lines, where he says that his soul had been set on fire by the "cold" Laura. The same expression is used of this very spring by St. Augustine in his *City of God* (21. 5), where after describing some miraculous springs he had seen he mentions this one in Epirus, which he had never seen. But the expression is as appropriate in St. Augustine as it is inappropriate in Petrarch, who had never seen the spring in question and was equally unacquainted with the others he names.

Now possible fictions, which we hold to be the poet's matter, not only must never have happened but must never have been invented and made the matter of a poem by an earlier poet. For whether that matter consists of things that have happened or things that have never happened but have been invented by some poet is of no consequence; the writer who appropriates it shirks the labor of invention. If he puts it into a language other than the inventor's he is a translator, and if he puts it in different words of the same language he is a thief; in either case he is no more than a mere maker of verses and no poet. On the other hand things that may happen and have never happened cannot constitute the whole matter of poetry. The characters of tragedy and epic poetry being royal personages, tragic and epic poems must of necessity be constituted of things that have happened and are matters of common knowledge. But these things must be known only in summary form so that the poet may exercise his genius and give proof of his powers by inventing all the necessary particulars and also the means whereby the action is made to move to its close. If the action were known in all its details it could not form the matter of a poem; for then if the poet introduced changes he would be censured as a falsifier of history and well-established truth, and if he did not he would be condemned as a thief for copying what had been written by another and as a deceiver for composing in verse and thereby giving the world to understand that his subject was not what had happened but what may happen....

* * * * *

[1.283] Aristotle writes (9. 51b 19-23) that "some tragedies contain only one or two known names, the others having been invented [by the poet]; in some not even one [is known], as in Agathon's *Antheus*. For in that tragedy both the actions and the names are invented, and yet the pleasure it gives is not [thereby] diminished." But if the names of the tragic agents are invented, it necessarily follows that the incidents must also be invented; if the plot is a tragic plot, it follows that the action must be about royal personages; and if no blame can attach to Agathon for his tragedy *Antheus*, it follows that no blame can rightly attach to any other poet who writes of kings who have never lived and represents them in actions that have never happened and on which both history and oral tradition are silent. Thus we cannot rightly condemn

Count Matteo Maria Boiardo, whose *Orlando Innamorato* tells of kings of non-existent regions of the world who bear names like Agramante, Sobrino, and Mandricardo, which were in reality the family names of laborers in his own county of Scandiano, a walled town in the district of Reggio, and which were in turn appropriated by Ariosto in his *Orlando Furioso*. Nor can we justly censure all those French or Spanish writers who in their fabulous romances have madly presumed to tell stories that have never happened about kings who have never lived and have offered them to the world not only as accounts of royal exploits, but for the most part as miraculous happenings. And we shall find no fault with Boccaccio's stories of the Count of Angiers (*Dec.* 2. 8), whose fortunes are bound with those of the royal house of France, and of Alessandro (2. 3), who from a usurer becomes son-in-law to the king of England and is later crowned king of Scotland, or with certain others that tell of royal actions that have never happened and that the histories brand as palpable falsehoods. And if Aristotle's authority and Agathon's example are accepted as guides they will surely lead us to even greater improbabilities. For if we are granted the freedom to invent kings who have never lived and royal actions that have never happened we shall also have the freedom to invent new mountains, new rivers, new lakes, new seas, new peoples, and new kingdoms; to remove known rivers from one country to another; and in short to create a new world or to transform the old, it being no less strange and monstrous for a poet to place the reign of Constantine between the reigns of Julius Caesar and Augustus than to place the Tiber between the Seine and the Rhone. And if I am told that the second is a more monstrous error than the first because the bodily eye can verify that the Tiber is in Italy and the Seine and the Rhone are in France, I reply that the mind's eye can verify no less conclusively that the reign of Constantine did not fall between the reigns of Julius Caesar and Augustus, for kings and emperors and their actions are consecrated to eternity by history and tradition, and are each given a place from which no falsehood can extrude them.

Aristotle defends his opinion thus: a tragedy which takes its plot and some of its names from history gives its audience pleasure despite the fact that those who know its action and some of its names to be historical are few; therefore tragic actions and names need not necessarily be historical. To which we reply that though an audience as a whole does not know whether an action and its royal characters are historical or fictitious, that portion of it who lack this knowledge take pleasure in them because they believe them to be historical and would feel only displeasure if they knew them to be fictitious, just as a man who takes pleasure in a gem because he believes it to be genuine will be pained by it the moment he is undeceived, and especially if it had been sold to him as genuine; therefore the actions of tragedies and their royal personages ought to be historical and not fictitious. Of the soundness of this conclusion I have had proof in recent years, when a Spanish book purporting to be a life of Marcus Aurelius gave its readers pleasure and enjoyed their esteem as long as they believed it to be a history, but once they discovered it to be a fiction their pleasure turned to disgust and their esteem to scorn.¹⁰ But,

Aristotle insists, Agathon's *Antheus* gives pleasure both to those who know and to those who do not know that its action and its names are fictitious; therefore tragedy need not necessarily deal with historical actions and characters. To which I reply that Agathon's tragedy dealt either with royal personages or private citizens. If it dealt with royal personages it could not, for the reasons already given, have pleased everyone equally, for those who knew it to be a fiction could not have taken pleasure in it; if with private citizens, it was to be condemned as representing matter inappropriate to tragedy.

* * * * *

[1.285] The conclusion to which Aristotle is led by the foregoing considerations is (9. 51b 27-29) that "the poet should be [as much] more a maker of plots than of verses as he is [more] a poet by reason of his imitations, the imitations being of actions."¹¹ Which is to say that a poet is more the poet for composing a plot than for composing verses to the same degree that he is more the poet for composing a plot with an action of his own invention than with one that merely recounts what has happened or retells an action invented by some one else. It is Aristotle's considered opinion, then, that the ability to make verses does not, as some held, make one a poet, just as one is not made a poet by simply recounting what has happened. But if it has been truly established that telling what has happened in verse does not make one a poet, it follows that the ability to compose in verse does not make the poet. The fact is, however, that this ability confers upon one a greater claim to the name of poet than does that of telling what has happened or of retelling an action invented by another; for the writer who follows either of these courses spares himself the labor peculiar to poetic composition and avoids exercising his mind in the process of invention, whereas the making of verses that are good, pleasing, and appropriate to their subject is a very difficult art requiring a genius at once keen and well exercised in versifying, so much so that, as I have already said, many have judged this to be a more difficult thing than the invention of an action and therefore have affirmed that the essence of poetry is not invention but versification.¹² What Aristotle should have said, therefore, is that the writer who invents his own actions has a much greater claim to the name of poet as against one who does not than the maker of plots has as against the maker of verses. To put it in different terms, a poet who invents his own actions is as much more the poet than one who does not as Caesar, for instance, is more a man than a dog is; for a writer who does not invent is not an artificer of the species poet, as the dog is not an animal of the species man. On the other hand a writer who invents his actions is more a poet than the mere versifier to the same degree that the plot has been shown to be a more important constituent of poetry than language. All of which seems to lead to the conclusion that since the recounting of what has happened cannot make or contribute toward making one a poet, it can only tend to deprive one of

that name; and since it cannot contribute toward making one a poet, the treatment of what has happened in combination with what may happen or with the writer's own inventions can only weaken one's claim to that title. In other words it would seem that tragic and epic poets whose plots are composed entirely of the royal actions of known royal personages (we have already shown that tragic and epic plots should develop actions of royal personages known only in summary form) have a lesser claim to the name of poet than does the writer of comedies and tragedies which, like Agathon's *Antheus*, represent fictitious actions and characters; and if the treatment of an action composed entirely of things that have happened will not earn a writer the name of poet, the inclusion of historical events in a plot will diminish the writer's claim to that title, so that he will be less a poet than one who is the complete poet because his plots are composed wholly of possible actions of his own invention.

Yet I am of the opinion that tragic and epic poets who tell the known actions of royal personages are no less entitled to the name of poet than are those who compose plots consisting of imaginary actions and imaginary characters; I would submit, in fact, that their title to that name is perhaps greater, for the events supplied them by history are few and they are not told in such detail as to lighten the labors they must endure in producing the inventions with which they flesh out the received story. For it is a fact that it requires no great powers of invention to imagine the kind of historical actions treated by tragic and epic poets. Everyone, for instance, can easily imagine in its outline the murder by a son of his mother, who, having slain her husband, had banished that son and usurped his throne, which she then enjoyed with her paramour. The difficulty arises when one undertakes to invent the means, which must be both novel and marvelous, whereby the son carried out his designs. This difficulty is much greater than that of inventing the basic action and both the particulars and the means whereby it is developed, for an action invented by the poet himself is not so rigid that in the process of developing it he cannot alter or modify it in any suitable manner or create such characters—whether intelligent, stupid, or of whatever type—as he deems best in view of the possibilities open to him to produce a perfect plot. This freedom is not enjoyed by the poet who treats a historical action and who is consequently restricted to exercising his invention within given limits.

The following anecdote will illustrate the nature of the difference that we are considering. Not many years ago excavators found in Rome a large and beautiful marble statue of a river god. Its beard had been broken off and lost, but it was apparent from the part preserved about the jaw that if it had been whole and well proportioned it must have reached to the navel. Yet its tip, which could still be seen on the upper part of the breast, clearly indicated that it had not extended below that point. This puzzled everyone, nor could anyone visualize the beard in its original form. Of those present only Michelangelo Buonarroti, a sculptor of very rare genius, succeeded, after pondering the problem, in understanding how the matter stood. He called for some clay, and when it was brought to him he gave it the shape of the missing beard, making it of a size commensurate with the dimensions of the part preserved. He then

attached it to the jaw and having stretched it to the navel tied it into a knot. The tip of the beard he had just made now touched the tip of the broken beard on the upper part of the breast. Thus to the great wonder of all present Michelangelo showed how the missing beard had been shaped and knotted, and not one among them but was moved by his marvelous feat to judge him a sculptor superior in discernment to any other who would have made a whole beard conforming to his own idea of what it should be, without regard for the remaining pieces of the original one.¹³

But historical actions present a greater difficulty than this, and one not met in imaginary actions. In the present age the means whereby historical actions can be developed are necessarily few, for the developments that are at once the most fitting and most marvelous have already been invented and utilized by earlier poets, with the result that anyone who undertakes to treat a historical action must possess the most extraordinary powers of invention and almost transcend his humanity if he is to merit the name of true poet. If a poet, for instance, should undertake to make a tragedy of, say, Orestes' murder of his mother, he would need to be endowed with a superhuman genius, for that history has formed the subject of many good tragedies by earlier poets, and they have already invented many different, and at the same time probable and marvelous, ways by which the mother's death was compassed, none of which could be appropriated by a later poet without his incurring the infamy that attaches to the thief. From the difficulties that beset such a poet others who tell of actions that have never occurred are quite free. Therefore comic and tragic poets who treat actions of their own invention have not a greater claim and should not be considered as having a greater claim to the title of poet than have tragic and epic poets who deal with historical actions.

* * * * *

[1.288] Aristotle asserts (9. 51b 29-30) that if a poet made "things that had happened" his subject "he would nevertheless be a poet," and no less a poet than if his subject had been things that had never happened. Soberly interpreted, these words mean that if a poet makes a poem of an action of his own invention not knowing that the action is known to history, he will not be less a poet than if the action had never occurred, for he had sustained the labor which earns one the title of poet.¹⁴ If, on the other hand, the action had been known to him as historical he would have deliberately shirked the labor of invention and consequently would not be recognized as a poet, as no man could be said to be a poet who should turn the history of Herodotus into verse. The very considerations which forbid the poet to recount things that have happened forbid him also to appropriate things that have been invented and made into a poem by another poet even though they have never happened. For to appropriate another's inventions requires as little effort as to recount things that have happened, and in fact it seems to be a baser form of theft to steal another's inventions, which belong to him and him alone, than to steal what has been produced by the course of human events under fortune, for historical

events seem to belong to no one person but somehow to the whole of mankind. And it is not only in poetry that the appropriation of another's productions is considered a theft; the practice is branded with that name in every other province of intellectual endeavor. Jurists, for instance, hold that a doctor of laws who in his lectures or consultations advances as his own a legal opinion that has been expertly formulated by another is subject to the penalty reserved for felons guilty of inflicting physical injury or of theft. These thieves are pointed at for what they are and are scornfully compared by everyone to the crow which adorned itself with the plumage of other birds so as to be esteemed worthier and more beautiful than any and all of them, but when these reclaimed their feathers was left naked, contemptible, and infamous. But if there is one thief who ought never to be spared the world's scorn and condemnation he is the poet who steals another's inventions, for the poet is essentially an inventor, and a writer without invention is no poet. Yet there are many poets of great renown who have stolen some or all of the matter of their poems from history or from other poets and whom an ignorant and besotted world nevertheless admires and commends where it should censure and despise. Boccaccio's story of the love of Giachetto and Giannetta (*Dec.* 2. 8), for instance, is but an adaptation of the older story of Antiochus and his stepmother;¹⁵ Ariosto filled his *Orlando Furioso* by appropriating whole stories now from Ovid and now from Statius or Marullo and others, and his story of Zerbino is taken without a single change from Henry, minstrel to the Emperor Henry IV.¹⁶ Petrarch did not scruple to steal the matter of many of his sonnets from Latin and Italian poets, and the sonnet (*Canz.* 234) beginning "O little chamber that wert once a haven" is stolen from Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 7. 5). Nor is this all. Virgil himself stole not a few things from Homer, if we are to believe Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 5. 2-10), who gives a whole list of them, and in thus seeking to exalt him exposes him for a thief to his discredit. Plautus and Terence stole whole comedies from the Greek poets, and Seneca whole tragedies.¹⁷ Boccaccio stole for his *Decameron* whole stories from various sources, as, for instance, that of the Gascon woman (1. 9) from the *Cento Novelle Antiche* (No. 51), that of Guido Cavalcanti (6. 9) from Petrarch (*De Rebus Memorandis* 2. 3. 24), and those of Peronella (7. 2) and Ercolano (5. 10) from Apuleius (*Metamorphoses* 9. 5-7; 24-25), who himself is guilty of stealing from others the matter of his *Metamorphoses* or *Golden Ass*.¹⁸ But enough, for this is not the place to disclose all the reprehensible thefts committed by these and other authors.

We need only add that some of these thieves masquerading as poets have the effrontery to contend that one may freely steal the inventions of other poets because one does so without injury to them. Nay, they will even indulge in jests and tell you that if you believe them to be thieves you need only look into the books they are accused of having pillaged to find that they are still intact, or at least that their thefts were not committed against the owner's will. And they go on to say that writers abandon their poems and send them out into the world without guardians to protect them against theft, and as persons who do not keep a watch on their property they cannot reasonably

feel aggrieved when they are robbed. But they are more audacious still and affirm that even though they fill their poems with the inventions of others they are not therefore guilty of theft, for no one ever says or is able to say anything that has not been said before. To all of which we may briefly reply that when an invention which began by being its inventor's becomes by theft the property also of another and the thief is held to be its inventor no less than the person from whom he stole it, the glory which should have been wholly the true inventor's is partly lost to him because a share of it has been given to another; but that when the stolen invention is credited to the thief, the true inventor is wholly and wrongfully deprived of his rightful glory, a glory of which everyone who delights in the pleasing labors of the poets should be a watchful and faithful guardian and preserver, abominating literary thieves as base ingrates worthy of every form of retribution. It is true, of course, that no one ever says anything that has not been said before, if by "anything" we mean the elements which compose each whole; but if the term designates the whole, then the proposition is untrue, otherwise we should be obliged to say that all poems composed successively through the ages are one and that Homer's *Odyssey*, which was composed after the *Iliad*, is the *Iliad* or some other poem earlier than the *Odyssey*, since those poems contain everything to be found in the *Odyssey*.

[I.487] Aristotle (17. 55a 34–55b 1) counsels the poet who would invent episodes for a tragedy to reduce another poet's tragedy, according to one reading of his text, or another poet's or one he himself has in mind, according to a second reading, to its universal form, for that form contains only the essentials of the tragic action and excludes the adventitious, and it will show what adventitious elements, which are simply episodes, are to be admitted into the plot and what places they are to occupy in it.¹⁹ To understand Aristotle's exact meaning we must bear in mind that the names of the characters in tragic and epic plots are not given them by the poet (though we have shown (V.5) that the epic poet may give what names he chooses to certain of his characters) and that the only parts of their plots that may be included in their universal form are those that are known in that form through history or oral tradition; the parts known in all their particularity through history or oral tradition must be told only in their particularized form. If, for instance, it is known through history or tradition that Orestes traveled to the country of Taurica to seek release from the madness by which he was seized after killing his mother, it would not be possible to tell in the universalized account of his journey that he found himself in Taurica "for a certain reason," without specifying what that reason was. For if this fact were told in its universal form, it could in the episodes be given a number of specific forms quite different from the one known through history or tradition. It could be told, for instance, that he chanced to land there when bound for a different destination, or that he had been taken captive and brought to Taurica by pirates from that country, just as if it were only known that he landed there by accident it could be said that he had been seized by workers in the fields or by soldiers guarding the

country's borders. As for the manner in which he and Iphigenia recognized each other, it too could be given a variety of specific forms, as Aristotle himself has said, since the manner of both Orestes' seizure and of the recognition are known through history or tradition only in their universal and not in a particularized form. A poet, then, must take existing tragedies and epic poems and retain, whether in their universal or particularized form, all that is known to have happened in them and discard all that some other poet added to it of his own. And because all that has been added is not an essential but an adventitious part of the plot, it is given the name of episode. After that has been done the poet must put episodes of his own invention in place of those that have been removed, and thus will be able to create a second tragedy or a second epic from the received one, not departing from the received action or the received characters.

But perhaps Aristotle has something else in mind and is not counseling us to reduce our own or another's plots to their universal forms so as to give the same action a new form and narrate it in a new epic or dramatize it in a new tragedy as an action of the same persons. We know, for instance, that the single event of the death of Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus provided matter to poets of very great worth for a number of tragedies that have been preserved to this day. This is not what Aristotle would have; what he would prefer is that we should reduce our own plots and those of others to their universal forms so that we could make of some action in that form a new tragedy or a new epic poem but not with the same characters. I am inclined to believe that this is Aristotle's true meaning. For, as we have already seen (9. 51b 20-23), Aristotle holds that the poet may not only give names of his own choice to his tragic characters but also invent the actions of which the plot is composed. For this reason we are to believe that his intention is to teach how the elements that go into the composition of plots of this kind are to be imagined. Now we must bear in mind that if we desire to make a new tragedy out of an existing one, setting it in a different time and a different place and with a different *dramatis personae*, we must reduce the plot to its universal form and discard the names of the characters and refrain from specifying the time and the place in which it occurred. What I mean is that we must universalize the plot to the extent that it would become impossible to tell that it is more an action of the persons about whom it was first told than of others; and to the end that it may be recognized as an action already told it will be necessary that the episodes, that is, the particulars which would make it recognizable, should be removed and new ones put in their place. And if this is Aristotle's true meaning in the passage under consideration and he there uses the term "universal" in the sense which we have just given it, it will become possible to take subjects for poems not only from existing tragedies and epics but also from comedies and from history, for then the new episodes will make them so different that they will not be recognizable as deriving from the actions that have been universalized, be they the actions of tragedies, epics, comedies, or histories. For example: a man was ardently in love with a woman and for some reason would not declare his love. Unable to endure the torture, he fell into a mortal illness.

But those who held the lover's life dear became aware in a certain way of his love and did all that needed to be done to bring that love to fulfilment, with the result that he regained his health. This is the story of Seleucus, Antiochus, and Stratonice in its universal form.²⁰ As long as it is known only in that form it is impossible to tell that it is more their story than that of Tito, Gisippo, and Sofronia or that of Giachetto and Giannetta, both of them told by Boccaccio.²¹ And because the universal story is not recognizable as that of the latter rather than of the former persons, it can form the subject of a number of plots; the particular story, on the other hand, which makes the universal recognizable by associating it with certain persons, cannot become the subject of other plots; and if the particularized action is appropriated by another poet the new story will be justly condemned as a theft. This condemnation is deserved by the whole of Boccaccio's story of Giachetto and Giannetta, in which the physician discovers that Giachetto was in love with Giannetta by the stronger beat of his pulse, a particular to be found in the story of the royal personages described above, as the reading of the book by Prince Gallehault was the particular that revealed the love of each for the other to Paolo and Francesca in Dante.²² Therefore particulars which identify a story as that of a few persons cannot be appropriated by a poet making a new poem along with the story's universal elements without his incurring the charge of theft; the particulars in the old story must be replaced by others in the new, and these particulars, following Aristotle, we will call episodes.

5e

It Must Not Be Episodic

[1.291] The fifth requirement of the plot (9. 51b 33–52a 1) is that it contain no superfluous or irrelevant episodes.... Episodes are the particularized elements with which the universalized plot is fleshed out and by which the equally universalized action is developed to its conclusion. Episodes are to be condemned when they are not appropriate to the universalized plot or are not connected with one another like links in a chain. An example of an unacceptable episode is the description of Mount Atlas in the *Aeneid* (4.246ff.), which offends both against necessity and verisimilitude: against necessity because since he was flying from heaven to Carthage, Mercury need not have passed over Mount Atlas; against verisimilitude because, unlike a bird in flight, a god does not grow weary and seek rest. But granted that the action may be accepted as probable, what purpose does the description of the mountain serve? Descriptions of mountains or other sites enable the reader to understand more fully whatever action is represented as occurring there. But how would our understanding of Mercury's action, even if we accept it as probable, be enhanced by the knowledge that the top of the mountain is or is not covered with snow or that its sides are or are not bathed by rivers? If a pause on Mount Atlas had been probable or necessary we should have been told of it and

should have been given the description of the mountain on the occasion of Mercury's first flight to Carthage. Yet of that flight Virgil (*Aen.* 1. 300-1) tells no more than

He flies through the boundless air
With the oarage of wings, and soon alights on the Lybian shores.

In my opinion it is episodes of this kind that Aristotle condemns in this passage....

* * * * *

[1.293] Actions containing unacceptable episodes are fashioned by both bad and good poets, but for different reasons: by the former because they do not know them for what they are, by the latter because, though they recognize them as blemishes, they deliberately stray from what they know to be the right path in order to oblige others.¹ Aristotle here (9. 51b 35-37) teaches that the poet should never introduce a disfiguring episode into his poem to be obliging. If Virgil had heeded Aristotle he would not have sought to flatter and gratify the Roman people by introducing into the *Aeneid* the episode that tells of Dido's illicit love for Aeneas, a royal action that is belied by history as both out of keeping with Dido's character and as anachronistic.² It is out of keeping with Dido's character because in her resolve to keep faith with her deceased husband Dido took her own life to preserve her honor; it is anachronistic because Aeneas could not have landed in Africa in Dido's life time. What is more, Virgil seems not to notice that the infamy with which he seeks to stain the glory of the foundress of Carthage in order to flatter the Romans is shared by the founder of Rome, for the affair does not much redound to his honor and in fact exposes him as a base ingrate. The episode of Aeneas' descent into Hades, also introduced to flatter the Roman people or Augustus, may perhaps be said to constitute still another blemish, for before Virgil's time that descent was unknown to either history or tradition, though both spoke of those made by Hercules, Theseus, Pirithous (*Aen.* 6. 392ff.) and Orpheus (*Georg.* 4. 453ff.). Virgil's handling of this episode also reveals how much more audacious he is than Homer, who represents Ulysses as summoning the dead in the usual way, by performing the required incantatory rites, whereas Aeneas, thanks to Virgil's inordinate audacity, descends alive into Hades by a privilege accorded to few and there sees the souls not only of the dead but of those yet unborn, learning from Anchises their names and future histories as explicitly as if the speaker had been a historian and not a prophet. In this Virgil violates the conventions of prophecy, which seldom condescends to name individuals or to describe particular events, but foretells all somewhat obscurely in figurative speech, as may be seen in the prophecies of Holy Scripture and in Lycophron's *Alexandra*. The same conventions were violated by Catullus, who in his poem on the nuptials of Peleus and Thetis (64. 338ff.), represents the Parcae as prophesying the birth and glorious exploits of Achilles with great explicitness. Proteus, on the other hand, who is represented by Ovid as mak-

ing prophecies about Achilles to Thetis (*Met.* 11. 222-23), does not mention Achilles by name, but foretells his future deeds in general terms in the manner of authentic prophecy:

Thou shalt be the mother of a youth who in deeds of arms
Shall outdo his father and shall be called greater than he.

But let him who seeks examples of inappropriately fashioned episodes designed solely for the gratification of some personage or house consult the *Orlando Furioso* of Lodovico Ariosto, who gives them now the form of prophecies and now of some other mode of utterance without ever observing the conventions of any one mode.

Aristotle has it that good poets allowed themselves to compose episodic plots in order to accommodate their actors, for in his time the actors in the tragedies of the various poets played in competition with one another, and a tragedy that was not strung out to fill the time prescribed by the judges could well cost them a prize by reason of its brevity. And it is probable that these superfluous episodes were fashioned with an eye to the things that the actors could do best rather than to the proper demands of the plot, for then they could display their strengths to best advantage and thereby establish a stronger claim to first prize.

5f

It Must Be Marvelous

[1.295] The sixth requirement of the plot is that it must be marvelous (9. 52a 1-11). Tragedy has been defined as the imitation of an action that is not only magnificent, complete, etc., but composed of incidents capable of arousing pity and fear. And since such incidents owe their effect primarily to the element of the marvelous in them, we could not neglect to speak of the marvelous, which engenders and intensifies pity and fear, without thereby forfeiting a full knowledge of those two emotions, which are among the principle elements of tragedy....

* * * * *

[1.304] We now proceed to a discussion of ... the type of marvelous occurrence that intensifies pity and fear. To understand the matter fully we must first divide the marvelous into three classes, according as it is met (1) in irrational animals and insensible objects, (2) in men doing some horrible deed deliberately or (3) in men doing some horrible deed accidentally against their will. These last are of two kinds, (a) those who do some horrible deed by following the very ways which they believe are least likely to lead to it and (b) those who are deceived into doing one against their intentions.

(1) The actions of irrational animals and insensible objects are the more marvelous the more they resemble or seem to resemble rational actions and such actions as are done by men after due deliberation. Hence history relates it as a marvel that a stallion which once refrained from covering a mare which he knew to be his dam and later did so in the dark, where he failed to recognize her, fell into such grief when undeceived that he kept dashing his head against a rock until he died.¹ Mankind regards it as a horrible and flagitious crime for a man to have commerce with a woman whom he knows to be his mother, and it is accounted a marvelous thing when such an occurrence comes to light once in an age. Among horses, however, the occurrence is a common one, (which is why Ovid's Myrrha can complain (*Met.* 10. 324ff.) that they enjoy a liberty denied to man); in fact a stallion that shrinks from covering his dam inspires wonder, for he does contrary to his nature what man does in conformity with his reason. In like manner if a marble statue should accidentally fall upon and crush to death the murderer or the enemy of its original, the occurrence would be accounted more marvelous than if another statue should bring the same death to some one not his enemy or even his friend, though among men the slaying of a friend or of some one not an enemy occasions greater wonder than the slaying of an enemy. The reason is the obvious one: that the statue, an object devoid of both sense and reason, does accidentally what a rational creature would do deliberately.

(2) The horrible deeds that men do deliberately, inspire greater wonder the less compelling the causes of which they are the effects. We find little or nothing to marvel at when a man kills an enemy, but we are filled with wonder when he kills a friend or some one not an enemy. And however great the wonder it inspires in us, his action fills us with pity not for him but for his victim, who could not have merited death at the hands of one not an enemy, much less at those of a friend, and with dread lest we too shall meet the same fate. On the other hand when the victim is an enemy our dread is much greater, knowing that we too might easily come to the same end, though our pity for the victim himself is rather weaker, since we suspect that his death may not have been wholly undeserved.

(3a) The horrible deeds men do against their will and even as they are striving to avoid them are of three kinds, according to the measures they adopt for avoiding them. (1) A person may choose to follow a course directly opposite to the one that would lead to the abhorred crime. Thus when he heard that he was to slay his father and lie with his mother Oedipus prudently fled from Corinth, the home, as he thought, of his parents, but his very remoteness from that city operated more than any other cause to implicate him in both patricide and incest. (2) A person may simply follow a different, though not opposite, course from the one that would lead to the crime. Cinyras arranged that during the night his daughter Myrrha's nurse should bring to his bed a young woman from a neighboring house. The nurse brought him Myrrha instead, and Cinyras fell into a crime he had been far from intending (*Met.* 10. 431ff.). (3) A person may follow a course that may or may not lead to the crime. Thus Jephthah (*Judges* 11:29ff.) makes a vow in the heat of battle that if

vouchsafed victory he would sacrifice to God the first person he would encounter upon returning home. This vow would not have proved to be the cause of a deed of horror if the first person he encountered had chanced to be a servant and not his daughter.

Oedipus' manner of falling into his crime is felt to be more marvelous than Cinyras' or Jephtha's, and Cinyras' more marvelous than Jephtha's, for we marvel only moderately when the deed of horror results from a course of action that may or may not lead to it, whereas we marvel greatly when it results from one that should normally have a different issue, and most of all when it results from one that was designed to lead to its opposite. And Oedipus' manner of becoming entangled in a deed of horror stirs us to greater pity and fear than Cinyras', which in turn we find less piteous and fear-inspiring than Jephtha's, for the man who, like Oedipus, has given the surest proof of his intention to avoid a deed of horror merits greater pity and inspires greater fear because of his strivings to remain guiltless than one like Cinyras or Jephtha, the first of whom strove less zealously than Oedipus and the second less than either.

(3b) Men who commit deeds of horror unwittingly are of two kinds, according as they are deceived by human or other agency. Examples of the first are Theseus, who is deceived by Phaedra into laying a curse upon his son and thus compassing his cruel death, and Lot, who slept with his daughters after they had so plied him with wine that he could no longer recognize them (Gen. 19:30ff.). Examples of the second kind are Hercules, who slew his wife and children in a fit of madness, and Iphigenia, who came very near sacrificing her brother because each remained in ignorance of the other's identity until almost too late. All deceptions effected by human agents are not equally marvelous, and the same may be said of deceptions of the other kind, for they sometimes differ greatly among themselves. All we can say is that, in general, the deceptions effected by human agents seem the less marvelous, for they are more frequent, and we tend to believe that effective precautions can be devised against them. Moreover they do not excite our pity and fear as strongly as the others, for the latter seem to be beyond our power to control....

* * * * *

[1.518] Aristotle has already said that the marvelous must be one of the elements of tragedy because it intensifies pity and fear. He now adds (18. 56a 19-21) that it also intensifies pleasure: "In reversals and in simple incidents they hit the desired target with the marvelous. For it [the marvelous] is a proper element of tragedy and gives pleasure to men." These words repeat certain ideas developed above, as that the plot should have a reversal from happiness to misery and that its characters should be of a certain kind—for instance, persons of ordinary virtue. But they are not repeated with the necessary completeness, so that the words here quoted must be expanded in the light of what the author has already said.² "In reversals," then, must be taken to mean not "in reversals of whatever kind" but "in reversals from happiness to

misery"; and "simple incidents" must be taken to refer only to such incidents as have a single effect. Incidents have a double effect when those who do and suffer are not all persons of the same kind. The slaying of Penelope's suitors, for instance, has a double effect: a reversal from happiness to misery for the suitors, who are wicked, and from misery to happiness for Ulysses and Telemachus, who are persons of ordinary virtue. On the other hand the discovery of their incestuous marriage has a single effect upon both Oedipus and Jocasta, a reversal from happiness to misery, for they are both persons of ordinary virtue. Aristotle then adds that the means whereby poets attain their object is the marvelous: "They hit their target with the arrow of the marvelous." That target is a double one, the first proximate and the second remote. The proximate target is to arouse pity and fear or to give pleasure by representing an action in which one or more persons fall into deserved misfortune. The remote one is to win public favor or to win the first prize in a competition.

* * * * *

[1.519] When combined with a reversal from happiness to misery suffered by a person of ordinary virtue, the marvelous intensifies pity and fear and therefore may be called a thing proper to tragedy; when combined with one suffered by a depraved person it brings consolation to the audience and thereby intensifies their pleasure. It is therefore reasonable to say of the marvelous that it is a thing that gives pleasure to men. And, though what Aristotle has said elsewhere (14. 53b 1-37) on this subject would indicate that he does not approve of the pleasure just described as a tragic effect, we are to believe that he did not condemn it outright but only pronounced it less commendable than the pleasure of the other kind, since he now (18. 56a 21-23) gives an ample explanation of his meaning, saying that the marvelous can be seen to give pleasure "when an astute but vicious person like Sisyphus is deceived and a strong but unjust one is overcome." Men are pleased when an astute villain is deceived, as when Sisyphus, who, though the shrewdest of men and never loth to put his shrewdness to evil uses, was deceived by Autolycus, who not only stole his cattle but transformed them so quickly that Sisyphus could not for all his cleverness recognize them as his own (Hyginus, *Fab.* 201). They are also pleased when the mighty who put their strength to unjust uses are brought low, as Goliath was by David, the shepherd boy (I Sam. 17:32ff.).

* * * * *

[1.520] There are two kinds of probabilities: those recognizable in representations of things that more often than not happen in a certain way, as when an astute villain is represented as deceiving and not being deceived and a strong man as overcoming and not being overcome, and those recognizable in the representations of things that occasionally happen in unexpected ways, as when an astute villain is represented as trying to deceive and being deceived

and a strong man as trying to overcome and being overcome. Probabilities of the first kind contemplate things that are known to happen frequently, those of the second kind are those known to happen rarely. But though both are indeed probabilities, those of the second kind are more marvelous because they occur but rarely, and for this reason, and also because they are unlike those of the first kind, they are said to be probabilities outside the realm of the probable. Aristotle therefore says that marvelous incidents, which are pleasing to audiences because they occur but seldom and do not conform to probable incidents of the usual kind, are not to be eschewed as improbable, for they are in fact probable. As Agathon says (18. 56a 23-25), there are probable incidents which, like those under discussion, are outside the realm of the probable in the sense which we have given to that phrase. This observation of Agathon's is repeated by Aristotle below (25. 61b 15) without mention of its source and again in the *Rhetoric* (2. 24), where it is attributed to him.³

5g

It Must Be Complex

[1.316] The seventh requirement of the plot (10. 52a 12-11. 52b 8) is that it be complex and not simple. A complex plot is one consisting of two different or, rather, contrary constituents, happiness and misery or misery and happiness. A simple plot is one in which happiness or misery prevails throughout. But we shall gain a firmer grasp of Aristotle's meaning and perhaps supply some elements lacking in his doctrine if we divide plots into four rather than into two classes. In our classification plots are (1) uniform or diversified, (2) simple or compound, (3) self-sufficient or dependent, (4) volitional or coercive.¹

(1) A "uniform" plot corresponds to the kind which Aristotle calls simple, and "diversified" to the kind he calls complex. These terms seem to me more descriptive of the types of plots we are undertaking to discuss. A "uniform" plot is one in which there is no reversal of fortune. The *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus may be taken as an example, though Prometheus' misery is somewhat greater at the end than at the beginning of the play. A "diversified" plot is one which contains a reversal from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness. An example would be *Oedipus the King*, in which Oedipus falls from happiness to misery, losing both his kingdom and his sight, and becomes a blind wanderer in foreign lands.

(2) I call the plot "simple" when, like that of *Oedipus the King*, it contains only one reversal of fortune, though the reversal may also be from misery to happiness. My definition differs from Aristotle's in that a simple plot is for me not one without a reversal but one containing a single reversal, as against two or three. Hence a "compound" plot² will be one which, like that of *Hercules Furens* and *Antigone*, contains more than one reversal, though when I say this I do not mean that all the reversals are suffered by the same person. In the *Hercules Furens*, for instance, Lycus, Megara, the children, Hercules

himself, and then again Megara and the children suffer reversals. The return of Hercules from Hades results in the loss of life and kingdom for Lycus, who had been a happy king, and the restoration of Megara and her children, who had been living in captivity and affliction, to freedom and happiness. After his victory over Lycus Hercules is bereft of his reason and kills Megara and the children, who thus suffer a fall from the height of happiness to the depth of misery.

(3) A "self-sufficient" plot is one in which the reversal of either kind is caused by incidents within the plot that would normally lead to the opposite issue. In *Oedipus the King*, for instance, the messenger from Corinth assures Oedipus that Merope is not really his mother; this is intended as consoling news, but it generates in Oedipus the suspicion that his mother is Jocasta, and the recognition that Jocasta is indeed his mother plunges him into extreme misery. In Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (23. 118ff.) a judicious shepherd seeks to console the troubled Orlando by telling him the story of the love of Medoro and Angelica and only succeeds in plunging him so much deeper into misery that he is seized by madness and fury. "Dependent" plots are the opposite of the "self-sufficient" in this: that whereas in the latter the causes of the reversal proceed from incidents within the plot that would normally lead to the opposite issue, in the former the causes of the reversal proceed from incidents outside the plot that would normally lead to the issue they actually have or at least not to the opposite one. An example of a reversal so caused may be found in Boccaccio's *Filocolo*,³ where Florio appears fully armed to rescue Biancofiore, who has been condemned to the flames and is on the point of being cast into them. Of this class of causes is the intervention of deities in the affairs of men, as when Iphigenia is translated from Aulis to the land of the Taurians. An example of a reversal brought about by causes which are meant to lead, if not to the issue they have, then at least not to the opposite one, may be found in Boccaccio's story of Violante and Teodoro (*Dec.* 5. 7), where Fineo, Teodoro's father, happening to pass through Trapani on his way to Rome, recognizes Teodoro as he is being led to the gallows and rescues him.

(4) A "coercive" plot is one in which a person is made to suffer a reversal of fortune by another. An example may be found in Seneca's *Troades*, where Astyanax is killed by Ulysses, who throws him from the top of a tower to the ground below, and Polyxena is slaughtered as a sacrifice at the tomb of Achilles. A "volitional" plot is one in which a person who suffers a reversal of fortune does so of his or her own will, as do Dido when she takes her own life and Medea when she slays her own children.

Of these plots the diversified are superior to the uniform, the compound to the simple, the volitional to the coercive, the self-sufficient to the dependent; and of dependent plots the kind typified by the story of Teodoro and Fineo is preferable to the other typified by the story of Florio and Biancofiore. The reasons why diversified, compound, volitional, and self-sufficient plots are superior to their opposites are so obvious that they need not be offered here....

* * * * *

[1.320] Aristotle says (10. 52a 16–18) that “a complex plot is one in which the change of fortune is brought about by a recognition or a reversal or both,” which is to say that a complex plot⁴ proceeds from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness in any of three ways: by the use of reversal without recognition; by the use of reversal and recognition operating independently of each other, the recognition being neither the proximate cause of the reversal nor operating jointly with it; and by the use of both reversal and recognition, the reversal occurring simultaneously with the recognition and having the recognition as its proximate cause. But perhaps a few words have been lost from Aristotle’s text, and the clause just quoted should be emended thus: “A complex plot is one in which the change of fortune is brought about by a recognition and a reversal operating independently of each other, or by both a reversal and recognition operating conjointly.” And indeed unless we adopt this expanded version of the text we shall find it impossible to verify what the received text would seem to say, viz., that a complex plot may have only a recognition and no reversal, for a plot cannot be complex unless it contains a reversal. A reversal from misery to happiness without recognition may be found in Boccaccio’s story of Donna Isabella (*Dec.* 7. 6), who was harboring two adulterers in her house when her husband returned unexpectedly. In the *Electra* there is a recognition scene between Orestes and Electra, but the reversal does not follow upon the recognition, nor is the recognition the immediate cause of the reversal. Recognition and reversal are found together, with the recognition the immediate cause of the reversal, in *Oedipus the King*....

* * * * *

[1.321] Though Aristotle asserts (10. 52a 20–21) that there is “a great difference between things happening *after* others or *because* of them,” he might perhaps have profitably drawn a finer distinction and have said that some incidents of self-sufficient plots are not the consequence of other incidents within the same plots (Hercules’ madness follows his revenge on Lycus, but is not the result of it), and that some are. The latter are interdependent in three ways. (1) They are designed to lead to the issue they actually have (the death of Clytaemnestra is the result of Orestes’ plottings); (2) they are designed to have a different issue (Adrastus aimed his spear at a boar and slew Atys); (3) they are designed to have a contrary issue (Laius is slain and Jocasta commits incest because Oedipus flees from Corinth to avoid slaying his father and marrying his mother). In like manner certain incidents of dependent plots are not related to other incidents, and some are. Those that are so related are likewise interdependent in three ways, the same three in which incidents are interdependent in self-sufficient plots. Examples of two ways in which incidents may be related in dependent plots are those numbered (1) and (2) above. An example of such incidents designed to have an issue contrary to the one they actually have may be found in Boccaccio’s story of Cimone (*Dec.* 5. 1), where

Ormisda runs to Pasimunda's aid and not only fails to help him but meets his own death. As for those incidents of dependent plots which are not related to one another, we need say no more about them than that they should be avoided.

* * * * *

[I.322] Aristotle defines reversal (ll. 52a 22-23) as "a change from one state of affairs to its opposite," adding, "as has been said," and thus referring us to a previous passage (7. 51a 11-15): "But to set down the limit in simple terms, let us say that a length necessary, events following one another in probable or necessary sequence, to effect a transition from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness is an adequate one" for a tragedy. A reversal, then, is a change from happiness to misery and from misery to happiness. Moreover, it must occur as a result of incidents that follow one another in a probable or necessary sequence, a requirement that Aristotle lays down in the passage now under consideration ("These incidents should have their origin in the plot itself, so that they are the probable or necessary consequences of previous incidents.") The terms "probability" and "necessity" have already been sufficiently explained. But since some tragic plots contain only one reversal and some more than one, we have called the first type of plot simple and the second compound.

* * * * *

[I.322] Aristotle now offers two examples of reversal. In *Oedipus the King* the messenger from Corinth came to Oedipus with what he believed would be happy news and in the hope that he would dispel Oedipus' fears of going near the woman whom he erroneously thought to be his mother; but he actually reveals to him his true identity and plunges him into misery, thus accomplishing the opposite of his intention.⁵ In *Lynceus* (ll. 52a 27-29), the incidents are so designed that one expects Danaus to live and Lynceus to die, yet the tragedy has the precisely opposite issue. By these two examples Aristotle demonstrates that the type of reversal of which he speaks in this passage and which he deems superior to every other is the type in which the incidents move not to their apparent issue nor yet to a merely different one, but to the precise opposite of the one intended....

5h

It Must Represent Suffering

[I.336] Aristotle now (ll. 52b 9-13) proceeds from his discussion of his seventh requirement of the plot, which is that it be complex, to that of the eighth,

which is that it represent suffering. In making the transition he does not say, "We have just discussed the complex plot," but, "We have discussed reversal and recognition, which are constituents of the complex plot and two factors that produce pity and fear. But pity and fear being also caused by suffering, let us discuss suffering also, which is third among the causes of pity and fear and eighth among the requirements of the good plot...."¹

* * * * *

[1.336] Aristotle defines suffering as "a destructive or painful action." The definition would have been more precise if it had been expanded to read, "A destructive or painful action that has happened or is about to happen." For the tragic person, of whom we have already had something to say, is filled with sorrow and wrath by a deed of horror committed by himself or some one else, by a deed which cannot be called horrible that he has committed himself or by a deed of horror not yet committed but about to be committed by himself. If his sorrow and wrath are caused by a deed of horror he has committed himself, he may in consequence commit another deed of the same kind (Oedipus and Jocasta, following the discovery of their incestuous marriage, went on, the first to put out his eyes with his own hands and the second to hang herself). On the other hand a second deed of horror may not follow the first (when Hercules discovers that during his fit of madness he had slain his wife and children he does not, for all his sorrow and wrath, add a second deed of horror to his first). If the tragic person's sorrow and wrath are due to a deed of horror committed by another he generally commits a like deed himself (when Aeolus learns that Macareus and Canace are guilty of incest, he brings himself to expose his innocent grandson to the wild beasts (Ovid, *Heroides* 11) and to kill his daughter (Hyginus, *Fab.* 283).² If the cause of the tragic person's sorrow and wrath is some deed that cannot be called horrible committed by himself, he will go on to commit some horrible crime (when Ajax discovers that during his fit of madness he had slain not men, as he had thought, but beasts, he turns his hand against himself). If the sorrow and wrath are due to a deed of horror not yet committed but on the point of being committed, the tragic person does not go on to complete it (Iphigenia, in sorrow and wrath for having ignorantly almost offered her brother in sacrifice, helps him to escape).

6

Recognition and its Means

[1.323] To understand what Aristotle has to say about recognition (ll. 52a 29-52b 8) and to gain an adequate grasp of this whole subject, we must first

know that recognitions are of five kinds. (1) The first is of two types: (a) the recognition which takes place between two persons when the deed is known and the identity of the agents is unknown, and (b) the recognition or discovery of a deed when the agents are known but the thing they have done is unknown. (1a) As long as the identity of the agents is unknown, the thing they have done is considered lawful. That Oedipus and Jocasta shared the same bed was at first accepted as right and lawful because their marriage had been duly solemnized, but once it was discovered that they were mother and son their relationship was seen to be unlawful and abominable. (1b) As long as the thing done is unknown, the agents, whose identity everyone knows, are considered good. Macareus and Canace were held to be virtuous as long as no one knew that they had been guilty of incest, but when the fact became known they were judged to be wicked and worthy of the severest retribution. Each of these types of recognition brings with it a reversal of fortune.

(2) The second kind is also of two types: (a) the recognition takes place after the deed of horror has been done or (b) before it is done. (2a) When the recognition is of this type the tragedy has an unhappy ending, for it brings remorse and despair in its train, and may well occasion other deeds of horror. Thus after Jocasta and Oedipus discovered that they had been guilty of incest, Oedipus put out his eyes with his own hands and Jocasta hanged herself. (2b) When the recognition is of this second type, the tragedy has a happy ending. In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Iphigenia was about to offer Orestes in sacrifice when she discovered that he was her brother, and their happiness was all the greater because the thing about to be done was so horrible and the escape so narrow.

(3) The third kind is again of two types: the recognition takes place after the deed of horror has been done (a) between two persons who are unknown to each other, or (b) between two persons one of whom knows the other. (3a) When the recognition is of this type there is no hate engendered between the two persons involved, each forgiving the other because they both were equally ignorant of their relationship. Persons who find themselves in circumstances of this kind are more likely to give themselves up to self-hate, as witness Oedipus and Jocasta. (3b) When the recognition is of this type the person who discovers the other's identity is filled with hate for him. Cinyras does not discover that Myrrha is his own daughter until after he had committed incest with her, though Myrrha knew that Cinyras was her father. For this reason Myrrha becomes the object of Cinyras' mortal hate (Ovid, *Met.* 10. 472 ff).

(4) The fourth kind of recognition between persons consists of (a) those that we may call principal and (b) those that we may call subsidiary. (4a) By a principal recognition I mean one that results in a reversal from happiness to misery (Oedipus and Jocasta) or from misery to happiness (Orestes and Iphigenia). (4b) By a subsidiary recognition I mean one that does not result in a reversal of fortune, but contributes toward bringing one about and is designed to do so, as does the one which occurs between Orestes and Electra.

(5) Recognitions of the fifth kind are those attributable to beasts or inanimate objects which in a given situation do accidentally what they would have done

if they had been possessed of reason and intellect and had therefore been capable of consciously identifying this person or that. We have seen an example of a recognition of this type in the statue of Mity's, which killed the man who was guilty of Mity's' death; and we may see two other examples of it in the fish which returned to Polycrates the ring he had cast into the sea and in the thunderbolt that struck Capaneus as he stood uttering contumelious blasphemies against the divine power. In these incidents the statue seems to recognize Mity's' murderer, the fish to recognize Polycrates as the ring's rightful owner, and the thunderbolt to judge Capaneus' offense as punishable by death.¹

Aristotle speaks of recognition as one of the factors that make for a more effective plot but has no word to say about ignorance, which nevertheless may have not only a place but a very important place in the plot and may contribute to its effectiveness. For the time being ignorance may be divided into two kinds, of deeds and of persons. That of the first kind may be subdivided into two according as the deed concerns or does not concern one of the two persons in ignorance of it. If a person is ignorant of a matter that concerns him more than others, the plot has an amusing ending and is delightful to a degree because the situation makes him the victim of deception. Many examples of persons ignorant of what concerns them deeply are to be found in Boccaccio. Gianni Lotteringhi (7. 1), Egano Galluzzi (7. 7), Nicostrato (7. 9), and the husbands of Peronella (7. 2), Madonna Agnesa (7. 3), and Madonna Isabella (7. 6) — all these are the husbands of adulterous wives in the *Decameron*, and their ignorance of a matter that concerns them more than anyone else serves to create amusing situations in each story.

Ignorance of a deed in persons whom the deed does not concern at all or less than it does others also makes for delightful plots. Two such plots are to be found in the *Decameron*. Because they are ignorant of her doings Madonna Ghita's neighbors and kinsfolk are taken in by her lies and proceed to upbraid her husband Tofano and to give him a severe drubbing (7. 4); Sismonda's mother and brothers are ignorant of what she has done and consequently accept her version of what happened, attributing her husband's account of her adultery to drunkenness (7. 8).

Ignorance of persons enters into plots and is sometimes a source of satisfaction to the ignorant and sometimes of grief. It is a source of satisfaction when the person in ignorance is really in bad case for having obtained what he desired from a person unknown to him whom he believes to be worth the price he paid and more. In Plautus, for instance, Pyrgopolinices, the boastful soldier, is found in the company of a baseborn harlot whom he took for a gentlewoman; but being ignorant of her identity he cannot grieve for having laid out so much money to obtain her, for it is to him a source of satisfaction that his money was spent in procuring the enjoyment of a woman who in his opinion was worth a great price.² Ignorance of persons is a source of grief when the man in ignorance is hindered from enjoying a woman whom he considers noble though she is actually baseborn, and hence is tormented by the delusion that he has been denied a great joy. This is so in the story in the *Decameron* (9. 5) which tells of Calandrino's unfulfilled passion for a woman whom he took

to be Filippo's wife, but was actually the latter's baseborn mistress. Calandrino is never told that the object of his passion was not really Filippo's wife so that his sense of frustration might not be allayed. That Calandrino is never told the truth is perhaps in keeping with Boccaccio's sagacious purpose, and the circumstance makes for a very effective story. But we cannot bestow the same praise on Plautus for allowing Pyrgopolinices to remain ignorant of the truth, nor yet admire the effect of his ignorance upon the story, for the soldier had had his pleasure of a woman whom he loved sufficiently to believe her worth all the pain she had cost him and more; and remaining, as he did, in ignorance of the truth, he could well judge that pleasure sufficient recompense for the money he had lost and the scorn he had incurred. Hence after he had been cheated of his money he should have been brought to a recognition of what had really happened and thus have been deprived of all cause for satisfaction. This is what Boccaccio does in the case of the Provost of Fiesole who slept with Ciutazza, and by doing so he deprives him of the satisfaction he might have enjoyed in the delusion that he had slept with the widow he loved.

It is well to recall at this point that Aristotle has nothing to say about ignorance either of persons or of deeds and that he speaks of only three of the kinds of recognition we have discussed, namely, of the kind which we have called "principal" (4a), of the kind in which the recognizing seems to be done by beasts and inanimate objects (5), and of the recognition of deeds (1b). And his discussion of them is not to be easily understood....

* * * * *

[I.328] Aristotle maintains (9. 52a 32-33) that "the best type of recognition is that which occurs at the same time as the reversals." His use of the phrase "at the same time" indicates that the recognition he has in mind is the recognition of persons which brings with it a reversal from happiness to misery (4a), eliminating the subsidiary type (4b), such as that between Orestes and Electra. Why Aristotle should pronounce the first of these two types of recognition far superior to the second is quite clear; but when he says, as he does soon after, that it is also superior to every other type, and especially to the discovery of deeds (1b), we cannot understand his preference unless it is justified by other reason than those he himself adduces. To prove that the recognitions in question and the consequent reversals from happiness to misery are the most suitable to tragedy, Aristotle says that they arouse pity and fear and that they make the agents happy or unhappy. Yet the discovery of an unknown deed and the consequent reversal in actions of the type suitable to tragedy are neither more nor less effective than the type of recognition and reversal praised by Aristotle for arousing pity and fear and making for happiness or misery. Thus when Aeolus (Ovid, *Heroides* 11) is plunged into misery by the discovery of the incest between his children Canace and Macareus, he moves other fathers who might be overtaken by the same misfortune to pity for him and fear for themselves. It is not for the reasons given, then, that the recognition of persons is the most suitable to tragedy, but because ignorance

of persons is a rarer thing than ignorance of deeds. For people do not commonly lose the ability to recognize other members of their own families, and when they do, or are made unable to recognize them by some accident, it is almost a miracle that out of the thousands of men and women in the world the deed of horror should involve two members of the same family who are unknown to each other. And it is no less a miracle that they should finally recognize each other by chance and thanks to words and things never intended to effect a recognition. These are the reasons why the recognition of persons is superior to all other types....

* * * * *

[1.329] Aristotle asserts (11. 52a 35-36) that the third type of recognition described by him, which has a deed for its object, is of two kinds, recognizing "what has been done," as when Aeolus discovers that his children Canace and Macareus have committed incest, and recognizing "what has not been done," as when Theseus discovers that Hippolytus has not violated his stepmother and has been guilty of neither word nor deed unbecoming a chaste stepson. Let us recall that when he defined recognition Aristotle said (9. 52a 29-32) that, as the word clearly implies, it is "the transition from ignorance to knowledge, resulting in love or hate between the persons destined for happiness or misery." This definition clearly declares his intention not to restrict the use of the term to the recognitions which consist in some one's recovering his knowledge of some person or thing after he had temporarily lost it through some accident. (Hercules, for instance, once had known Megara and his sons perfectly; during his fit of madness he no longer knew them and failing to recognize them took their lives; once restored to sanity he recovered his lost knowledge.) His intention is, rather, to extend its use also to the recognitions in which some one who has lived in complete ignorance of some person or deed comes to know the one or the other for the first time. Hence it would perhaps have been well if he had drawn a distinction between acquired and recovered knowledge. Examples of the first kind may be found in two stories in the *Decameron*. In the story of Alessandro and the "abbot" (2. 3), Alessandro never knew that the "abbot" was a woman until he touched her breasts; in the story of Tancredi and Ghismonda (4. 1), Tancredi does not know of Ghismonda's unchastity until he chanced to see her with his own eyes dallying with Guiscardo. An example of the second kind has been noted in the story of Hercules. Another example may be found in Boccaccio's story of the widow (8. 7) who, having forgotten the injury she had once done to a scholar, stupidly does his bidding, only to recall it after she had been made his dupe. It would appear, then, that these two types of recognition are so different that they should have been seen as distinct types, and it perhaps requires a more skilful poet to handle the one type well and make it accord with necessity or verisimilitude than to handle the other.

It would seem that each recognition of an unknown person or deed could and should be subdivided into three to accord with the three types of ignorance,

which differ widely from one another in the manner in which they conceal from us the identity of the persons or the deeds to be recognized. For it is ignorance that occasions recognitions, and there can be no recognition where there has been no ignorance. Persons and deeds may be unknown for three reasons: because they are completely hidden (while in the grotto Guiscardo [*Dec.* 4. 1] remained unknown to Tancredi because he kept himself where the latter could not see him or otherwise become aware of his presence), because they appear in the form of something else (Buffalmacco [8. 9] is not recognized by Master Simone because he appears to him in the form of a horned beast), and because though they retain their own form that form has undergone an adventitious change (Lodovico [7. 7], a gentleman, disguises himself as a servant and remains unrecognized by Egano de' Galluzzi). Turning to the examples of the ignorance of deeds, a wife's adultery goes unrecognized for what it is by her husband because it had not come to his notice either in the form of something else or in the form of an adulterous act that had undergone an adventitious change (Francesco Vergellesi [3. 5] knew nothing of his wife's adulterous relations with Il Zima because they had not come to his notice), because it comes to the husband's notice in the form of something else (Isabella [7. 6] is surprised by her husband with two adulterers, Leonetto and Lambertuccio, in the house, but he never learns of her offense because on his arrival the one escapes and the other gives the affair a new form by explaining that he had sought refuge in Isabella's house from the threats of the first), and because though it comes to the husband's notice in its own form, it is judged to be something other than an adulterous act thanks to certain adventitious circumstances (Tarquin [*Livy* 1. 58] knew that Sextus Tarquinius had had his will of his wife Lucretia, but neither he nor others of his family convict her of adultery because they knew that she had yielded to force, a circumstance that made the supposed offense something of a different nature).

It is well to note that when persons or deeds are unknown because they are not to be seen in their own forms or those of other things, it is no more difficult to represent a situation involving a person than one involving a deed. But when persons and deeds are unrecognized because they appear under forms not their own, the representation of persons is more difficult than that of deeds, for persons can be represented, and then with great difficulty, under only a few forms other than their own, whereas deeds can be easily disguised under many. Isabella's adultery (or adulteries), for instance, is given the form of a brawl between Leonetto and Lambertuccio; Madonna Agnesa's (7. 3) of a miraculous cure by Fra Rinaldo; Peronella's (7. 2) of the sale of an oil vat; Monna Belcolore's (8. 2) of the loan of a stone mortar; and Ambruogia's (8. 1) of a loan of money. But why do I multiply examples of the possible ways in which this deed alone may be disguised when the other things under whose appearance it may and in fact has gone unrecognized are innumerable?

When persons and deeds, on the other hand, appear in their own forms after these forms have undergone some adventitious change, the reverse is true, for persons can be disguised, and therefore made unrecognizable, in many ways, and deeds in only a few. Hence when adultery, which, as we have seen, can

be made unrecognizable in many ways by being given the appearance of other things, retains the appearance of adultery, it can be made unrecognizable by no more than two things, force and the open threat of death. But a person may conceal his identity by a mere change of attire. Thus the "abbot" (*Dec.* 2. 3), who was a woman, deceived Alessandro into thinking she was a man, and Achilles (*Hyginus, Fab.* 96) was mistaken for a maiden by Lycomedes. By impersonating men and women of low degree great lords and ladies can travel unrecognized, as did Saladin (*Dec.* 10. 9) in his travels over the whole of Christendom and Giletta (3. 9) in her journey from Roussillon to Florence. By donning a religious habit the layman Tedaldo (3. 7) is able to converse with his mistress and remain unrecognized, and the Italian Torello (10. 9) effectively conceals his identity in his Saracenic disguise. Thanks to an adventitious change in the air, which from bright became dark, Titus (10. 8) could visit Sophronia one night and remain unrecognized by her, and Catella (3. 6) failed to recognize Ricciardo at midday because the windows of the chamber were shut. Owing to changes wrought by time Beritola (2. 6) is unable to recognize her son, and Fineo (5. 7) unable to recognize Teodoro. Finally because of a change in belief, Nicoluccio Caccianimico (10. 4), who had come to believe that his wife Catalina was dead, failed to recognize her, and Tedaldo's brothers fail to recognize him for the same reason. The number of adventitious changes that can prevent the recognition of a person who has not undergone a change of form is infinite. The few I have offered will suffice to substantiate my general statement.

* * * * *

[1.333] Aristotle has considered the recognition of one person by another person, the apparent recognition of a person by an animal or an inanimate object, and the recognition of a deed. He now (11. 52b 3-8) returns to the first of these and says that recognitions of that type are sometimes single and sometimes double. Single describes the situation in which one person knows another but is unknown by him, and double the one in which neither person knows the other. The first situation requires only one recognition, the second requires two. For an example of a double recognition he refers us to the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides, where Iphigenia comes to recognize Orestes as her brother and Orestes Iphigenia as his sister. But if we are to profit from Aristotle's words and learn to judge rightly which of these two types of recognition is the more commendable, we must note that in the situation in which one person knows another but is unknown by him the recognition of the first by the second can occur through his own efforts or against his will. If through his own efforts the recognition lacks the element of the marvelous, for it is an easy thing for a person to disclose his own identity if he is inclined to do so; if against his will, the recognition cannot but astound us, for the person so recognized has made every effort to remain unknown. In cases of double recognition the first recognition cannot but be striking and therefore commendable, since it can only happen by chance. As for the second it is not highly

commendable if it occurs through the efforts of the person to be recognized, but highly commendable if it occurs against his will. Hence we may see how much more of the marvelous there is in Orestes' recognition of Iphigenia, which was the result of accident, than in Iphigenia's recognition of Orestes, which was the result of Orestes' efforts. What I have been saying about the relative merits of the recognition which occurs through the efforts of the person who knows the other and that which occurs against that person's will may be validly applied to the situation in which one of three persons who is known by both the others comes to recognize the one of the two whom he does not know. An excellent example may be found in Dante's *Purgatorio* (21. 94ff.), where Dante by smiling against his will occasions Statius' recognition of Virgil, who already knew him.

As with knowledge so with ignorance. There are situations in which one person is ignorant of the identity of the other (in the *Odyssey* [19. 386ff.] the old nurse does not know Ulysses but is known by him) and others in which both are ignorant of each other's identity (in *Iphigenia in Tauris* neither Iphigenia nor Orestes knows the other). In the first situation the ignorance may have its cause (1) in the person unable to recognize others, (2) in the person unrecognized, or (3) in both. (1) It has its cause in the person incapable of a recognition when he has lost his reason (Hercules failed to recognize his wife and his children and Athamas [Hyginus, *Fab.* 5] his son because they were insane or when though sound of mind he believes that a person whom he would normally know is unknown to him (Cinyras [Ovid, *Met.* 10. 298ff.] believes that his daughter Myrrha is a neighbor's daughter, and Nicolucci Caccianimico [Dec. 10. 4] fails to recognize his wife because he thought she was dead and reasonably mistook her for some one else). (2) It has its cause in the unrecognized person because he has undergone some miraculous change (Cephalus [Ovid, *Met.* 7. 694ff.] and Mercury [ibid. 2. 687ff.] are not recognized, the one by Procris and the other by Battus because they have been miraculously transformed) or has been transformed by hardship or disease (Gisippo [Dec. 10. 8] is made unrecognizable by the hardships he has suffered and Martellino [2.1] because he successfully assumes the form and manner of a cripple) or has disguised himself by a change of attire (which is the reason Tedaldo [3. 7] and Torello [10. 9] were not recognized by their friends). (3) It has its cause in both parties. The failure of Tedaldo's mistress to recognize him was due to her belief that he had died and to his having disguised himself as a pilgrim. Ignorance of the second kind is commonly due to changes wrought by time in the faces and figures of both persons.

Of these kinds of ignorance the least commendable in a poem are those due to loss of reason and to miraculous change; the most commendable are those due to rational belief and to changes produced by hardships and disease. Between the first group and the second are to be placed those due to changes wrought by time in a person's face and figure, and to attire that effectively disguises the wearer.

* * * * *

[1.451] Aristotle now (16. 54b 19-55a 21) supplements his discussion of recognition with some remarks on the means whereby recognitions are made, a subject which, as he now sees, must be considered if the discussion of recognition is to be complete.... It is to be noted that he here discusses only the means whereby persons are recognized and is silent both on the means whereby one may recognize deeds and on those whereby recognitions are made by animals or inanimate objects.... If we are to understand his observations clearly we must consider four aspects of the means of recognition: (1) what they are, (2) their value, (3) their use, (4) the occasions on which they are used.

(1) The means of recognition are three: (a) marks, (b) actions, (c) words. (1a) Marks are of two kinds, those which are part of the body (moles, scars) and those worn on the body (rings, clothes). The marks which are part of the body are of two kinds, the congenital (moles, six fingers in one hand) and the acquired (tumors, scars). Congenital marks are also of two kinds, those common to all members of a family (the lances on the descendants of the five survivors among those who sprang from the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus, the ivory shoulder common to all the descendants of Pelops) and those peculiar to one person (moles, birth marks). (1b) Actions are of two kinds, according as they are performed by the person to be recognized or by him and one or more others. Examples of the first kind are to be found in Boccaccio's story of Martellino (*Dec.* 2. 1) who, having gone into a church impersonating a cripple, opens first a finger and then a hand, then straightens an arm and finally the whole body and so is recognized; in the same author's story of Torello (10. 9), who was recognized by Saladin when, as the latter was discoursing with him about his hawks, he chanced to smile and to move his mouth in a way that Saladin had noted when his guest in Pavia; and in the episode in the *Odyssey* (8. 521 ff.) in which Ulysses wept as he heard the harper's lays of the Trojan war. These actions may be described as voluntary (Martellino), natural (Torello), and accidental (Ulysses). (1c) Words are of two kinds, each subdivided into two others. The first consists of those spoken for the express purpose of effecting a recognition and is subdivided into two according as the speaker is the person to be recognized (in *Iphigenia in Tauris* Orestes effects the recognition of himself by his sister) or a third person (the old man [Hyginus, *Fab.* 184] brings about Merope's recognition of her son as she was about to slay him). The second kind consists of words spoken with some end other than recognition in view and is also subdivided into two according as the speaker is the person to be recognized (in the *Iphigenia* of Polyidus Orestes seems to have communicated to Pylades the fact that death was upon him by saying that he was about to be sacrificed as his sister had been before him and thus inadvertently becomes known to Iphigenia) or a third person (in the *Inferno* [25. 43] one of the spirits among the thieves cries within Dante's hearing, "Where could Cianfa have stopped?" and thus inadvertently discloses that Cianfa is of their number). I realize that our classification might be more thorough and perhaps more nearly complete, but we have chosen to confine

it within its present limits so as not to risk straying from Aristotle's meaning....

(2) The value of all three means of recognition resides in their being more or less adequate to do the thing they are required to do. Some of them at times constitute no more than indications of a person's identity, while others partake also of the nature of demonstrations. Though these last would seem to be of greater value than the first because they leave little room for doubt, they are in fact of less value because a recognition that results from little more than surmise lends increased interest to the plot.

(3) By the "use" of the means of recognition we mean the end which they are made to serve. This end may sometimes be a recognition and sometimes something other than or different from or opposite to a recognition. Though the first of these uses would seem to be the most commendable, it is actually the least so, and the third is more commendable than the second.

(4) The occasions for introducing any of the three means with proper regard for verisimilitude or necessity are offered by the plot. But of the plot viewed as the ground for such occasions Aristotle fails to speak adequately. He speaks of its offering two occasions for introducing marks, actions, and words that will indicate or demonstrate the identity of a person, namely, memory and reasoning. Actually, these are only two of many....³

* * * * *

[I.455] The means of recognition are simply the proofs and reasonings by which we determine the identity of the person to be recognized. In his *Rhetoric* (1. 2) Aristotle divides proofs into two classes, the artistic and the non-artistic. "Artistic" proofs are those which the orator cannot invent except with great labor and the strenuous exercise of the intellectual faculties. "Non-artistic" proofs are those which he may invent without bringing into play the subtler faculties of the mind, for they are the kind that may be grasped by the ignorant multitude.⁴ Turning from oratory to poetry (16. 54b 19-55a 21) he now calls "least artistic" the recognitions made through means that require no intellectual labor in the inventing. And because it is an easy thing for a person to have himself recognized by another whenever he is so minded, his employment of various means to bring that about makes the recognition non-artistic. In like manner, if a person bears visible marks which declare his identity and which, like brands on beasts of burden and marks on their packs, seem to be there for that purpose, a recognition effected through them would seem to be non-artistic even though they were not used by the bearer as a means of establishing his identity. We may conclude, then, that when a person bears marks on his face or hand or other exposed part of the body, a recognition effected through them is non-artistic even though the bearer does not use them to have himself recognized. But when the marks are on some unexposed part of the body and are discovered thanks to a turn in the plot that would not normally lead to a recognition, the recognition is not non-artistic. Thus the recognition of Ulysses by his nurse is artistic both because the washing of the feet was not intended to issue in the discovery of the scar and the consequent

recognition of Ulysses, and because Ulysses could not have had his feet washed without exposing it. When, therefore, Aristotle brands recognitions made by means of scars and similar marks "least artistic," we should bear in mind that he condemns only those made by means of visible marks or those displayed for the express purpose of bringing about a recognition....

* * * * *

[1.456] A recognition made by means of marks that at first blush are insufficiently distinctive is more interesting than one made with the help of a mark peculiar to a single person; and since the least distinctive marks are those common to a number of persons, those common to a whole race or family make for more interesting recognitions than do those that are peculiar to one person. For this reason Aristotle now (16. 54b 21-23) names a few congenital marks shared by many persons. The first is "the lance." If we supply "they say" we shall have his full meaning, which is, "such, they say, is the lance." This was a congenital mark in the shape of a lance on the skin of the descendants of the few who survived from among those who sprang from the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus. This race of people Aristotle calls "earth-born," because unlike other human beings their progenitors were born not of woman but of the earth. Ovid (*Met.* 3. 118; 7. 141) follows him by calling them *terrigeneae*, but others (Pindar, *Isth.* 1. 130; 7. 10) call them "the sown men"....

* * * * *

[1.457] Tokens and marks acquired after birth (16. 54b 23-25) are of two kinds, (1) those which are intended to produce a recognition and (2) those which are not, but which are made to serve that purpose when the occasion presents itself. (1) The scarlet thread which the midwife tied as a means of recognition around the hand which Pharez thrust out of his mother's womb before birth is a token of the first kind;⁵ another is the ring (*Dec.* 3. 9) which Giletta, impersonating a Florentine young lady, demanded of her husband Beltramo. To this class belong also the things left with children who in our day are secretly sent to foundling hospitals and in former days were abandoned in the streets, when such things are left with them so that when the children have grown they may serve as means of recognition. (2) A token not intended to be a means of recognition but later used as one is the ring by which Tedaldo (*Dec.* 3. 7) had himself recognized by his mistress. That ring she had given to him on their last night together, and he had kept it most faithfully not for the purpose for which it was later used but as a pledge of their love. Another token of the same kind is the ring (*Dec.* 10. 9) by which Torello of Pavia was recognized by his wife. This ring also had been given by wife to husband for another purpose than the one which it came to serve. To this class of tokens belong also the objects left with children when they are exposed to be recovered by others or to die, when such objects are not intended to serve as future means of recognition. Such are the chest of bulrushes daubed with bitumen (*Exod.*

2:3) in which Moses was exposed on the banks of the Nile, the chest (Liv. 1. 4. 6) in which Romulus and Remus were placed when they were exposed by the Tiber, and the cradle or chest in which Neleus and Pelias were placed when they were exposed in the sea. None of these things is originally intended to serve as a means of recognition, but they eventually do, as does the cradle or chest in *Tyro* (16. 54b 25).⁶ Tokens of this second kind are more commendable than those of the first....

* * * * *

[1.459] As we have already observed the use of marks as means of recognition may be more or less commendable. The situations in which such marks are so used are four. (1) The first, which is also the least commendable, is that in which a person who desires to make his identity known makes use of marks on his body as the means to that end. In the remaining situations, each of which is more commendable than the one before, the person recognized does not desire to be known but comes to be recognized (2) when certain marks on his body are seen; (3) when, owing to some turn in the plot, the marks are accidentally exposed, as were Teodoro's (*Dec.* 5. 7) when he was stripped to the waist to be scourged and was recognized by his father; (4) when, again owing to some turn in the plot, the marks are exposed against the bearer's will, as happened to Ulysses when he was recognized by the nurse.

These uses of marks are also more or less commendable according as the recognition occasions a more or less intense joy or sorrow. The neatherd and the swineherd, for instance, were not so gladdened by their recognition of Ulysses (*Od.* 21. 207ff.) through the scar as was the old nurse, for at the time they saw it they already knew, as the nurse had not, who Ulysses was from what he had told them, and the scar served only as corroboration. Fineo too was profoundly affected by the recognition of his son through the red spot on his skin (*Dec.* 5. 7), for up to that moment he had no inkling of the youth's identity, and his happiness was all the greater because he recognized him as he was being led to his death. The recognition intensifies the emotion it occasions not only when it saves some one from death but when it clears some innocent person of the charges of depravity and brings about the conviction of the guilty one. Thus by being shown the signet, the cord, and the staff he had given Tamar, Judah recognized that he had been guilty of incest with his daughter-in-law (*Gen.* 38:13ff.), and Tamar is saved from a shameful death....

* * * * *

[1.461] Aristotle has discussed the recognitions which result from the use of marks and has said that these marks are used in two ways, as the principal factors in the recognitions and as factors that merely confirm and verify recognitions already made. He now (16. 54b 3-37) proceeds to a discussion of recognitions that are effected by words and actions, which are the constituents of the plot, first dividing them into two kinds, according as they are

effected by the plot or by the poet. This does not mean that both kinds of recognitions are not the work of the poet, but only that those of the first kind are so managed that the words or actions which occasion them cannot be replaced by others without disturbing or altering the plot, whereas those of the second kind can undergo such replacements without perceptible effect. An example of recognitions of the first kind is Orestes' recognition of Iphigenia, and of the second Iphigenia's recognition of Orestes. Iphigenia was recognized by Orestes as the result of a chain of interdependent incidents. Two Greek youths who had chanced to land in Tauris were about to be sacrificed. As a Greek woman, Iphigenia took pity on them, and in her pity she spared the life of one of them and gave him leave to return home. With one of the youths about to return to Greece, she bethought herself of using him as a messenger to bear tidings of herself to her family. She accordingly wrote a letter for him to deliver to her home. But realizing that the letter might be lost she disclosed its contents to him and told him that it was destined for her brother Orestes. On the other hand Iphigenia recognizes Orestes not as a result of a chain of interdependent incidents, but because Orestes declares that he is her brother and then proceeds to call certain matters to her mind, among them the spear that had once belonged to their great grandfather. The spear is the kind of thing that might be replaced by something else without substantial change in the plot....

* * * * *

[1.464] The proofs by which we generally ascertain that a deed has been done may be divided into two kinds, the permanent and the transitory. If a person is known to be normally impelled by inveterate habits and inclinations that dispose him to wrongdoing, this permanent sort of evidence may be submitted to establish his guilt for a given crime. We know, for instance, that Ulysses is constantly goaded by a vicious appetite for revenge on his enemies, that he possesses the cunning to satisfy that appetite, that he is eloquent, and that enjoying, as he does, the favor of the gods, he may hope to commit any crime with impunity. This evidence may be advanced to prove that he was the slayer of Ajax. Transitory evidence is the kind that is observable only at the time that a certain crime has been committed and therefore relates the suspects to that crime and no other. Keeping to the example just offered, the fact that Ulysses was seen issuing from the wood where Ajax was found slain, that he carried a naked and blood-stained sword in his hand, that he was skulking about to escape the notice of wayfarers on the road in the manner of one who had just committed a crime that he would keep hidden—this knowledge is also evidence that may be advanced to prove that he had slain Ajax.

There are likewise two kinds of proofs that may result in the recognition of a person, the permanent and the transitory. Permanent proofs are those that always suffice to establish a person's identity. Scars and congenital marks, already considered as means of recognition, constitute proofs of this kind. Transitory proofs are those produced by the actions that constitute the plot. These

are the proofs that Aristotle is considering in this passage (16. 54b 37-55a 17), dividing them into two kinds according as they are produced by memory or by reasoning. The first of these consist of the things a person does as a result of seeing or hearing something that makes him aware of his present state or revives in him the memory of a former one. This visible demonstration of an inner state furnishes others with the proof needed to recognize him. The second consists of words spoken with some other end in mind than that of producing the recognition of the speaker but leading nevertheless to that recognition.

Now though both these transitory proofs for the recognitions of persons are clearly distinguishable from the permanent they are not equally distinguishable from those which result from developments in the plot. And they remain so until we see that Aristotle's criteria for distinguishing the latter from the former are not permanence and transitoriness but conclusiveness and inconclusiveness, the permanent proofs being in themselves sufficient to establish a person's identity and the transitory insufficient, for the identity of a person could not be established through them if some one did not use a person's actions and words as the beginning of a reasoning process. Knowing this, we can see that both these proofs should be called proofs through reasoning when seen from the point of view of the recognizer; seen, however, from the point of view of the person to be recognized one of them should be called proof through actions and the other proof through words. For the actions which lead to recognitions do not have only one cause (the calling to mind of one's present or former state) but a variety of causes, and the same is to be said for the insufficiently revelatory words which initiate the reasoning process that ends in the recognition of a person.

To sum up. There are two kinds of proofs for recognizing persons: the permanent (scars, congenital marks, and words which, like proper names, declare a person's identity) and the transitory (actions and words which, unlike the ones just named, do not declare a person's identity except on some one or another particular occasion). Of these two kinds of proofs, some are sufficient to declare a person's identity and some insufficient, some are so dependent upon the plot that they cannot be replaced by others without thereby altering it, and others are so independent of the plot that they could be replaced without affecting it in any way; finally, of all these proofs—the permanent and the transitory, the conclusive and the inconclusive, the dependent and the independent—some are directed toward a recognition as their end and others toward a different end or an opposite one....⁷

* * * * *

[1.468] We have said that Aristotle has named one kind of recognition through reasoning because the recognizer sometimes achieves a recognition by reasoning upon something said by the person to be recognized. Now it cannot be denied that in the *Choephoroe* of Aeschylus the recognizer is not the person who comes to the recognition through reasoning. The same might be said of

Adrastus, who recognizes Polyneices in the *Tydeus* of Theodectes. In that play Tydeus and Polyneices are in Argos. After they had quarreled they were asked to tell who they were, and Polyneices replied that he was the grandson of one who perished on a journey in search of his son. In these two examples there is no reasoning by the persons recognized. Yet, though Aristotle gives us two examples, the recognition of Orestes in the *Iphigenia* of Polyidus the Sophist and that in the *Phinidae*, in both of which there is some reasoning on the part of the recognized, it does not follow that in these plays the recognizers do not reason too, appropriating the reasoning of those to be recognized as matter for their own. Recognitions through reasoning (16. 55a 4-12), then, the kind found in all the examples offered, should get their name from the reasoning of the recognizers and not from that of the recognized, for the latter are not called upon to reason in all the examples. Next, we have observed that recognitions through reasoning occur when the words of the person to be recognized initiate a reasoning process in the recognizer, as they do in the *Iphigenia* of Polyidus the Sophist, in the *Tydeus* of Theodectes, and in the *Phinidae*. This does not mean, however, that, as has been said, such reasonings do not occur when the recognition is occasioned by something done rather than said by the person to be recognized; or by incidents in the plot, as when these fall short of clearly establishing a person's identity; or by marks or tokens if they offer opportunities for reasoning, as do Orestes' footprints in the *Choephoroe*....

* * * * *

[1.472] Aristotle has proved with four examples that certain recognitions are effected by reasoning and that the reasoning is sometimes done by the recognizer alone and sometimes both by him and the person recognized. He now (16. 55a 12-16) proceeds to show that there is a kind of recognition effected by false reasoning. In recognitions of this kind the reasoning is done by the recognizer and people of the common sort,⁸ not by the person recognized and the intelligent. False reasonings sometimes make for false recognitions though these are nevertheless accepted as true by the common people. For an example of a recognition of this type Aristotle refers us to *The Mendacious Bearer of Tidings of Ulysses*. The tragedy has been lost, and we have only fragments of the plot; yet the few words in Hyginus (*Fab.* 243. 1)⁹ may serve as the foundation for a reconstruction that may approximate the story on which the tragedy was based. Seeing that Penelope would marry none of her suitors because she believed Ulysses to be still alive, they brought to her a stranger who professed to be the Ithacan boy who had accompanied Ulysses to Troy. He related how he had been Ulysses' servant all through the war and how when Ulysses embarked on his homeward voyage he sailed with him until they landed at a certain place where Ulysses died, adding a circumstantial account of his death. But since with the passing of the years the boy had grown into a man and no one could any longer tell by his appearance whether he was indeed Ulysses' servant boy, the stranger offered to establish his identity and thus win credence for his tale, saying, "Set a great number of bows before me,

and among them the one which my lord Ulysses left at home when he sailed for Troy. I shall single out that bow from the rest, and thus give clear proof that I am Ulysses' servant." The bows were set before him, and though he had never before seen Ulysses' bow he did not fail to identify it. This was accepted by Eucleia, Ulysses' mother, as proof that the stranger had indeed been her son's servant and had brought true tidings of his fate, and overcome with grief she took her own life.

Aristotle will discuss false reasonings more fully below (24. 60a 18-26) so as to cast more light on his present discussion of the subject, and, as we shall show, his later observations will have to be combined with these earlier ones. But we may anticipate him by pointing out that if B normally follows A, it is false to suppose that if B appears it must have had A for its cause. The ground is always wet after a rain, but it is false to suppose that whenever the ground is wet there has been rain. In like manner it is true that a person who has seen a certain bow will recognize it in the future, but it does not follow that everyone able to recognize it has seen it before, for he might have secured the necessary information in some other way. The impersonator who recognizes Ulysses' bow, for instance, might have had it described to him by some one who knew it, he being himself incapable of telling by chance or through reasoning whether Ulysses' bow was the one he identified or one of the others....

* * * * *

[1.474] Aristotle asserts (16. 55a 16-20) that of all the types of recognition he has discussed the best is that which we have classified as (2a), which he says is brought about in a probable manner not by the poet himself but by the plot, i.e., by a succession of interdependent incidents.¹⁰ This judgment justifies our having divided the second type of recognition into two, declaring, as we did so, that Aristotle's words pointed not only to recognitions made by the poet but also to others brought about by the plot. If we had failed to see this Aristotle would here be awarding the highest praise to a kind of recognition he had never mentioned. It is also to be noted that Aristotle does not assert that the kind of recognition in question is superior to all the rest in all circumstances, but only when it brings to light some deed of horror that has been done or prevents one from being done, this being the kind that the audience finds astounding. Such are Oedipus' discovery of his parentage, which brings to light a deed of horror already done, and the mutual recognition of Orestes and Iphigenia, which prevents a deed of horror from being done. It is possible, after all, for a recognition to be the probable result of a sequence of incidents and yet to occur at a time when it would neither bring to light a deed of horror already done nor prevent one from being done. Electra, for instance, might have recognized Orestes at such a time....

* * * * *

7

Complication and Resolution

[1.499] Aristotle has already divided tragedy into five quantitative parts....In this passage (18. 55b 24-32) he divides it into two quantitative parts not included in the five, the complication and the resolution, adding that the first part is often composed of two groups of incidents, those outside the plot, i.e., those that took place before the day on which the tragedy is represented as occurring, and those within it. He says "often" and not "always" because the first part is only rarely composed entirely of incidents occurring within the single day in which the tragedy unfolds. He goes on to say that the second part should consist entirely of incidents within that day but not included in the first part. Finally to tell precisely where these parts begin and end he says, "I call complication the part [that extends] from the beginning [of the story] to the part which is the last before the change of fortune to happiness [or unhappiness] and resolution the one [that extends] from the beginning of the reversal to the end of the tragedy." What Aristotle is defining, then, are the components and the boundaries of these two parts, and to make his meaning clearer he describes for us the complication and the resolution in the *Lynceus* of Theodectes. Commentators take this tragedy to be the same as the *Lynceus* cited above without the poet's name, and it is therefore not surprising that they should be confused by Aristotle's description. The fact is, however, that the *Lynceus* of Theodectes told a story quite different from the one told by the anonymous *Lynceus*, and that the *Lynceus* of one tragedy is not the same person as the *Lynceus* of the other. The *Lynceus* of Theodectes told the story of Tereus, Procne, Itys, and Philomela, and took its title from the name of the person at whose house Tereus was served up the flesh of his own son; the anonymous *Lynceus* told the story of Danaus, Hypermnestra, and Lynceus, the last being Hypermnestra's cousin and husband, and the person from whom the tragedy took its name.

Aristotle's discussion will become clear if we assume that the plot of Theodectes' tragedy ran something like this: Lynceus, a great lord of Thrace, was a very great friend of Tereus. One day Tereus left Philomela at his palace. Laethusa, Lynceus' wife, assumed that Philomela was Tereus' concubine and sent for her friend Procne, Tereus' wife, to show her how great an insult she was being subjected to by her husband. Procne recognized Philomela as her sister, and once informed of the wrong she had suffered, conspired with her to slay Itys, Philomela's son by Tereus and to serve up his flesh to the boy's father. They accordingly seized Itys and hid him from his father's sight. When the boy failed to appear Tereus, who had received an oracle that his son was to be slain by a kinsman, concluded that he had been murdered by his brother Dryas, who, should Itys have died before his father, was to have inherited Tereus' throne. Tereus acted upon his suspicion and slew Dryas. After this murder Procne and Philomela served up Itys' flesh to Tereus, and it is to be

believed that they did this in Lynceus' house. This argument has been developed from a few words in Hyginus (*Fab.* 45) and those in the passage in the the *Poetics* that we are at present expounding. What Aristotle is showing, then, is that the complication in the *Lynceus* of Theodectes consists first of the incidents that occurred before the day on which the tragedy is represented as occurring—Tereus' violation of Philomela, his leaving her with Lynceus, the coming of Procne to Laethusa's house, and others of the same kind—and secondly of those which occurred on the day of the tragedy, such as the seizure of Itys by Procne and Philomela. The resolution, on the other hand, consists of Tereus' fixing the guilt for the supposed death of his son upon Dryas and of the other incidents from that point to the end, like the murder of Dryas and Tereus' eating of his son's flesh. Tereus begins to suffer a reversal from happiness to unhappiness at the moment he begins to suspect that Dryas has murdered his son.

It is to be noted that this second division of tragedy into quantitative parts in no way invalidates the earlier division. A tragedy may properly be divided as it was earlier into the parts which are related in the manner then described or into the two parts of the present division with their own peculiar relationship. This division, which contemplates only the matter of the action, applies to the plot and to none of the other qualitative parts, whereas the first applied to character, thought, language, and spectacle no less than to plot....

* * * * *

[1.503] If we desire to know the precise meaning of Aristotle's observation (18. 56a 7-9) that "whether a tragedy is the same as another or different from it is determined by the plot, a plot being the same as another if it has the same complication and resolution," we must assume that he holds it as an irrefutable truth that a tragedy not distinctly different from another is to be judged unacceptable and that one which differs from all others and is therefore unique is to be commended for the differences which make it what it is. The reason for this is obvious, and it is that in addition to having produced a tragedy which, because it resembles other tragedies or is indistinguishable from them, will inevitably reduce its audiences to boredom, the poet has shirked all labor in producing it, having simply followed in the footsteps of other poets and almost copied what they had written. It is also to be noted that an acceptable tragedy may be said to differ from another in two ways, either because though it has the same plot its complication and resolution are differently conceived or because it is unlike it in plot, complications, and resolution. In like manner an unacceptable tragedy may be said to be the same as another for two reasons, because though its plot differs from that other's its complication and resolution are worked out in the same manner or because it is exactly like it in plot, complication, and resolution. A tragedy, then, is not to be judged the same as another or different from it because it has the same or a different plot, but because it is the same as another or different from it in its complication and resolution; in forming this judgment the plot should be left out of account.¹

Examples of acceptable tragedies with the same plots but different complications and resolutions are the two by Sophocles and Euripides that bear the title of *Electra* and the *Choephoroe* of Aeschylus. Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* differ in plots, complications, and resolutions, as do Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. Many a tragedy can be judged to be the same as another because though different in plot it follows that other closely in its complication and resolution, and the same judgment may be passed on many tragedies, comedies, and narratives that have appropriated not only the complications and resolutions of other works but also their plots. Examples of these latter are not only the tragedies of Seneca and the comedies of Plautus and of Terence, which are translated from the Greek and even retain the names of the characters in the Greek originals, but also some stories of Boccaccio, who, however, gives the characters names of his own choosing. I do not mean to condemn translations as translations, nor do I think that Aristotle does. In point of fact it is highly probable that Aristotle never thought that the foreign languages which the Greeks indifferently called barbarous possessed anything worthy of being translated into their own language or that their uncouth vocabularies could reproduce the beauty of Greek sentiments. What I condemn is translations which are palmed off as originals and by which translators, and especially Terence, unjustly usurp the name of inventor and poet.

Aristotle's remarks on this subject are less than complete, for they fall short of teaching whether a tragedy is to be praised as original or condemned as the replica of another if it has the same complication as that other and a different resolution, or a different complication and the same resolution, or a complication or resolution that is partly the same and partly different. In point of fact they are not only incomplete but unnecessary, for these matters have been adequately treated in earlier pages, as in those in which he discussed the universal and the episodes, as well as elsewhere. They may also be branded as quite futile, for they fail to teach how to alter the complications and the resolutions taken from other poets....

* * * * *

[1.505] Aristotle now asserts (18. 56a 9-10) that many poets handle the complication well and the resolution badly, at the same time adding that they must learn to handle both parts with equal skill. This animadversion on a common failure need occasion no surprise, for the proper handling of the resolution requires greater genius than that of the complication. Boccaccio, for instance, had no difficulty producing a satisfactory complication for the story of Messer Torello of Pavia (*Dec.* 10. 9), for if Torello's family had had no news of him for all of a year because he was then being held captive by the enemy after the Christian army in which he had served had been devastated by a plague, it is not at all unlikely that it should be widely rumored that he was dead though he was all the time safe and sound in Alexandria. But to manage his return from Alexandria to Pavia in one night, which constitutes the begin-

ning of the resolution, was no easy task, and so Boccaccio found himself obliged to introduce a necromancer into the story. But that device is an offense against verisimilitude because, among other reasons, if Saladin had kept a necromancer at his court he would not have run the risks involved in visiting the countries of the West in the guise of a merchant to observe the preparations being made for the crusade against him, but would have availed himself of his necromancer's art to have himself conveyed speedily and safely to any destination he desired. I do not mention another factor that militates against a satisfactory handling of the resolution, that by the time he comes to compose the second part of his poem the poet's genius has lost some of its freshness and vigor. But what measures does Aristotle recommend for preventing this failure? None, assuredly, except a reminder that the second part of a tragedy should offer the audience as much pleasure as the first. If a physician told his patient to live so as to enjoy consistently good health, the patient would reply, "I shall not know how to keep in good health unless you give me instructions." In like manner a poet who has never mastered the proper management of resolutions might reply to Aristotle, "I shall not succeed in making the resolutions of my plays as pleasing to the audiences as the complications unless you give me specific instructions." Aristotle's counsel, then, is void of counsel.

8

The Solution of Difficulties

[I.432] Aristotle has said (15. 54a 33-34) that "in the portrayal of characters as in the construction of plots the poet should always strive for the necessary or the probable, representing *this* as following *that* either as a necessary or probable consequence." This statement affords him the opportunity of considering (15. 54a 37-54b 8) the matter of resolution in tragic plots; for if every action in a plot must bear a probable or necessary relation to one preceding it, a resolution which offends against necessity or verisimilitude, as do most of those that occur miraculously, cannot be judged acceptable. It is therefore obvious that in a tragic plot the resolution should be the result of incidents within the plot, i.e., that escapes from impending perils or solutions of any difficulties that have emerged in the course of the action should be the results of actions within the plot that are probable or necessary consequents of those perils or difficulties....¹ The escapes and solutions we are considering may occur in four ways, two of them by means of persons or things within the plot and two by means of persons or things outside it. We now proceed to explain with examples the phrases "persons or things within the plot" and "persons or things outside the plot" and also to show that escapes and solutions effected in the first two ways are more commendable than those effected in the other two.

(1) Solutions of the first kind are to be divided into (a) those effected through the use of the very persons and (b) those effected through the use of the very things that created the perilous or difficult situation. An example of a resolution of type (1a) is found in Boccaccio's story of Isabella (*Dec.* 7. 6), where Isabella is surprised by her husband harboring two adulterers in the house, and being unable to find a hiding place for them both invents an explanation which makes use of their presence there to conceal her adultery from her husband. An example of a resolution of the type (1b) is found in the story of a woman of our own city who used the very cloak that had thrown her into difficulties to escape from them. Knowing that her husband was to leave the city on a certain morning and to remain abroad for at least a good part of the day, she invited her lover to join her at her house during his absence. This he did gladly, and the two had pleasure of each other in her chamber. When the husband was heard entering the house unexpectedly, she managed, before he appeared at her door, to lead her lover to a dark closet, where he could hide from him. The two had been thrown into such confusion that neither had the wit to remove from the table the cloak which the lover had laid there. When the husband entered his wife's chamber and saw the cloak, which was new, he asked, "Whose cloak is this?" To which she readily replied, "It is a cloak I have had made for you; you have not noticed that the one you are now wearing is old and shabby and a disgrace to a person of your rank, and you have not bestirred yourself to have a new one made." The husband believed her story and commended her to himself as a discerning and loving wife.

(2) Solutions of the second kind are effected when a person extricates himself from a perilous or difficult situation not by making use of the very persons or things that were its cause, but by improvising the use of persons or things that had no part in causing it. Thus Sismonda in Boccaccio (*Dec.* 7. 8) induces her maidservant to take her place in her marital bed so that her husband Ariguccio might be made to appear a simpleton and she herself be saved from the charge of infidelity. Thus also Tofano's wife (*Dec.* 7. 4) tricks her husband into believing that she had jumped into a well when she had only dropped a stone in it and saves herself from the scorn she would have been subjected to as an unfaithful wife.

Both these kinds of solutions are said to be effected by means of persons or things within the plot because they are effected by persons or through persons or things introduced into the plot before the difficulties to be resolved have emerged. But those of the first kind are much more effective than those of the second because the persons or things used to produce the happy solution were or seemed to be of a kind to produce an unhappy one and consequently make the solution seem more marvelous than any which result from the use of persons and things readily acceptable as likely to produce them.

(3) Of the two remaining kinds, both of which are effected through persons or things outside the plot, the first consists of those in which the persons or things involved are new to the story and are not brought into it by the persons in difficulty or danger. Thus Giovanni di Procida and Restituta (*Dec.* 5. 6) are saved from death at the stake by Ruggieri dell' Oria, who had not

previously been one of the persons in the story and is finally brought into it not through the efforts of Giovanni or Restituta but by chance. This type of resolution may be handled in a great variety of ways. Sometimes it is very effective, especially when it involves the recognition of a person, as in the story in Boccaccio (*Dec.* 5. 7) in which Teodoro and Violante are saved from the gallows by the chance arrival of Fineo, Teodoro's father. Sometimes it is less so, as in the story of Giovanni and Restituta.

(4) The last kind consists of miraculous solutions effected through the gracious intervention of God.² Aristotle considers this kind the least satisfactory of the four, and with reason. For all things being possible to God, solutions due to divine intervention are miraculous but not marvelous, and they may be worked out without great exertion on the poet's part, for there is no difficulty from which a character may not be made to extricate himself with divine help. But since there are a few situations in which this type of resolution is admissible, Aristotle now undertakes to tell us which they are....

* * * * *

[I.436] The story of Medea offers subjects enough for a number of tragedies, as, for instance, the death of her brother Absyrtus, the death of Pelias, the death of Creusa and of Medea's children, and the lethal potion which Aegeus gave at Medea's instance to Theseus. In each of these possible tragedies difficulties might be solved by miracles or by divine interventions. Since, however, in this passage (15. 54b 1-2) the tragedy in question is simply named the *Medea*, we shall assume that Aristotle has in mind the tragedy of that name by Euripides, in which after she has compassed Creusa's death by burning and has slain her own children Medea eludes Jason by escaping in a chariot drawn by winged dragons sent down by the sun. This method of escape is also adopted by Seneca in his *Medea* and by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* (7. 394 ff.). Therefore in the phrase "by some mechanical contrivance" Aristotle does not restrict his meaning to the appearance of some god but designates generically the appearance of all those things which by means of some mechanical contrivance are brought on the stage to furnish instant and supernatural assistance to those in difficulty. An example of such an appearance is that of the chariot in the *Medea*....

* * * * *

[I.437] Aristotle now refers to the episode in the *Iliad* (2. 142 ff.), where the Greeks are inflamed by Agamemnon's speech with a desire to return to their homes ... but are foiled by the appearance among them of Minerva, who was sent down by Juno to urge Ulysses to arrest their flight. By the time she arrives, however, they were all determined to set sail for home and were already on their way, so that restraining them appeared to be a task of almost insuperable difficulty. Homer solves the difficulty by bringing Minerva to Ulysses' side to advise him on how to achieve the desired result. Aristotle

judges this solution unsatisfactory because it is not effected by the very persons or things that created the difficulty. Observe that in the *Iliad* mechanical contrivances are never brought into play to enable the gods to descend from heaven to earth, for epic poems represent all actions by means of language and therefore can dispense with such devices. On the other hand if an action like Minerva's were to be represented on the stage some mechanical contrivance would be called for. This is why Aristotle does not say that the difficulty facing the Greek army was resolved "by some mechanical contrivance," as was that of Medea's flight.

From all this three conclusions may be drawn: first, that Aristotle, as we have said, is not here speaking of the solution of the final difficulty in a poem but of the solutions of difficulties emerging in any part of it; secondly, that he is not speaking solely of the solutions effected through mechanical contrivances and the apparitions of gods, but also of those effected through mechanical contrivances and the miraculous appearance of other things as well; and thirdly, that he is not speaking solely of the solutions effected by the employment of mechanical contrivances and the miraculous appearances of gods or things, but generally of miraculous solutions effected by whatever means. For the solution may be independent of the difficulty whether the difficulty is the last in the poem or one of the many others, whether the gods or things appear miraculously by means of mechanical contrivances, or whether they can or cannot dispense with such contrivances.

* * * * *

[I.438] Having condemned all solutions of difficulties effected by the use of mechanical contrivances or in some other miraculous fashion, Aristotle adds (15. 54a 2-6) that it is not his intention to condemn such solutions when their purpose is to reveal what has happened in some place remote from the scene of the action or to recount a past occurrence or prophesy a future one, these being things that no man can reasonably know except by a miraculous revelation, for everyone believes that God knows all that has happened in the past, sees all that is happening in the present even in places very remote from one another, and foresees all that is to happen in the future. Aristotle adds this so that poets may avoid situations so little probable as those in which persons are represented as having learned without divine assistance things past, present, or future beyond man's power to know. But there is another source of improbability in such situations which Aristotle does not consider. It is that by revealing past, present, and future occurrences to men God is made to appear as man's servant and bound to do man's bidding. This source of improbability may be removed, however, if the men to whom revelations are vouchsafed are represented as so devout that they seem almost to merit God's favor. Aristotle, then, condemns as unconvincing all divine apparitions that have a purpose other than that of revealing to men such knowledge as they could never gain by the exercise of their own powers. By the same token it must be equally unconvincing that these apparitions should confer upon men

benefits other than such as cannot be secured by human effort. Yet in the example from the *Iliad* Minerva herself descends from heaven at Juno's behest and urges Ulysses to arrest the Greek army's preparations to return to their homes without, however, saying to him or teaching him anything that, unless he was totally devoid of understanding, he did not already know. But Minerva's mission will appear reasonable once we recall the belief widely held among the common people that God's manner of governing the world in the present age is not the same as that which He followed in ancient times. It is now commonly believed that in these times God does not govern the world by visibly appearing to men in dreams or visions or audibly enlightening their minds with His inspirations but by counseling His servants with silent admonitions or by other means beyond the powers of gross minds to comprehend and ponder. On the other hand it is also believed that in the earliest ages of the world, in the days of the demigods, God governed the world by Himself appearing to men, who, as the pagan religion held, were his children and grandchildren, speaking with them and offering them his counsel and assistance not only in perilous enterprises and in those beyond the mental and physical powers of men to accomplish but also in others that confronted them neither with great perils nor with obstacles beyond their powers to surmount. Taking this belief into account tragic and epic poets, whose poems include the actions of the demigods, do not refrain from introducing the gods in situations in which divine assistance is not needed, as, for instance, that in the second book of the *Iliad*, where Minerva's intervention could have been dispensed with....³

* * * * *

[I.440] The words (15. 54b 5-6) "We attribute to the gods [the power] to see everything" must not be interpreted in the sense which they seem to convey, that *all* gods see all things, past, present, and future; for the only gods who foresee the future are those who possess the gift of prophecy, like Apollo, Nereus, Proteus, and certain others. Hence poets must be on their guard against representing any gods not of that number as foretelling future events, and when they do so must take pains to explain how these gods have come to know what they foretell. Thus when he represents Vulcan, who does not possess the gift of prophecy, as carving on Aeneas' shield future events in Roman history, Virgil, as if in reply to possible objections, says that Vulcan was able to do this not because he was endowed with prophetic powers but because he had received the knowledge of the future from soothsayers and from others in possession of that knowledge.⁴ But if the gift of prophecy belongs to few gods, it belongs to still fewer human beings, and the poet must not presume to attribute it to any except the few who are known to have possessed it, as, for instance, Tiresias, Helenus, Cassandra, the Sibyl, and a few others. Hence one may well wonder how Boccaccio (*Dec.* 3. 8) has the temerity to put a prophecy in the mouth of the abbot, who after putting Ferondo in Purgatory says, "Ferondo, take comfort, for it is God's pleasure that you return to the world,

where you shall have a son by your wife whom you must name Benedict, for it is by the prayers of your holy abbot and of your wife and for the love of St. Benedict that God grants you this favor." For if the child, as was quite possible, had been a girl, the abbot's prophecy would have been false, and the good opinion which Ferondo had, and the abbot wished him to have, of the abbot's sanctity would have suffered in consequence. It would therefore have been wiser if the abbot's prophecy had been ambiguously worded so that it would have been equally true whether the child had proved to be a boy or girl, as, for instance, "You shall have a child by your wife whom you must name after St. Benedict." One might also wonder at this same Boccaccio's handling of another prophetic utterance (*Dec.* 10. 1), this time put in the mouth of King Alfonso of Spain, who led Ruggieri de' Figiovanni to two locked coffers, the first containing a great treasure and the second earth, and as he bade him choose one for himself prophesied that he would choose the second. The king's prophecy came true; but if it had not, would not the King, whom Boccaccio depicts as a man of great wisdom, have been accounted a fool? Would he not have been made the object of derision? Would not everyone have said that he merited that reverse for having entrusted his honor to Fortune?

In relating past occurrences the epic poet enjoys an advantage denied to the tragic poet. For thanks to the general invocation to the Muses in the opening lines of the poem and to special invocations here and there in the body of the work, the epic poet is enabled to describe any occurrence however remote from all that men know and remember, it being the office of the Muses to preserve the memory of past things. This the tragic poet cannot do because he can never speak in his own person. But though the epic poet may, thanks to the Muses, know past events and tell of them in his own person, he can no more than the tragic poet represent his characters as knowing them except as they have had them revealed to them by God or reported by some person in possession of the facts. Nor do I think it permissible for a poet to represent the Muses as revealing forgotten things to the persons of a tragedy or an epic poem, for their revelations are strictly reserved for the poets, and the only knowledge they reveal to them is such as they need for the composition of their poems. For this reason I fail to see how Catullus (68. 41-46) can be praised for having written:

I cannot forbear to mention, Goddesses, how Mallius has been
of help to me
And how great have been his favors,
Lest the coming time with its forgetful ages
Should bury his devotion under black night.
But I will tell you, and do you in turn repeat it to many thousands,
And vouchsafe that this page will still proclaim it when it has
grown old;

for the Muses reveal their knowledge to a few, that is to say to a few poets, and not to the many thousands who do not bear that name. Nor is it necessary

for them to receive the knowledge of things from the poets, for it is their nature to know and preserve and then to impart needed knowledge to poets only, by whose efforts it is then disseminated among countless thousands.

Events that happen at a distance from the scene of the tragic action are of two kinds, those which can be reported by human means, as, for instance, by messenger or letter, and those which cannot, because they happened either in a secluded place and in the absence of eyewitnesses or in a place so remote from the scene in question that the news could not have conveyed there in time by human agency. In this passage Aristotle speaks only of the second kind. An example of events which can be known only through a revelation for lack of eyewitnesses is the death of Sychaeus in Virgil (*Aen.* 1. 353 ff.). Another example of the same kind may be found in the *Decameron* (4. 5), in the story in which Lorenzo appears to Lisabetta in a dream and tells her of his own death. An example of news that cannot be reported in the usual manner for lack of time is Messer Torello's being alive on the day his wife remarried, which explains why he was magically conveyed in one night from Alexandria to Pavia (*Dec.* 10. 9).

* * * * *

[I.443] Aristotle has said that the solution of difficulties by divine intervention is in general not to be commended. He has added, however, that such solutions are tolerable when present, past, or future events that occurred at some distance from the place of the action cannot be known except by the intervention of supernatural beings. His defense of divine intervention in the transmission of knowledge of past and remote events calls to his mind (15. 54b 6-8) the fact that improbable things which would be unacceptable if represented as happening in the course of an action become acceptable if they happen far from the scene of the action or long before it. Thus we do not blame Sophocles for representing Oedipus as ignorant of the manner in which Laius, his father and his predecessor on the Theban throne and the husband of Jocasta, his mother, who became his wife, had met his death. Yet it is not probable that in the time between the death of Laius and the beginning of the tragedy he should never have made the effort to learn who his predecessor had been and how he died, for it was because Laius had been murdered that the throne fell vacant. Aristotle will repeat this defense of Sophocles below (V. 4b; 2. 193), and so for the time being I will say no more than that if it is valid for Sophocles it is also valid for Homer, who represents Priam (*Il.* 3. 141 ff.) standing on a tower toward the end of the Trojan war and bidding Helen to name for him the Greek captains in the plain below. This scene is highly improbable because, as we have already pointed out, some of the very men whom he presumably had never seen before that moment he had already received as ambassadors in his palace and, again, because it assumes that he had never before stood on that very tower and sought the desired information from Helen or another. On the other hand the scene seems less than totally improbable because Priam's failure to ask the names of the Greek captains occurred long before the episode in question.

But if Sophocles had composed a tragedy on Oedipus beginning immediately after the death of Laius and had made him so remiss in his new office as not to avail himself of the opportunities offered him to learn who Laius had been and how he had met his death, his remissness would have been unacceptable for being part and parcel of the plot. And if Homer had represented Priam seeing the Greek captains for the first time from the tower or other place of outlook, his failure to ask on that occasion that they be named to him would have been equally unacceptable.

9

The Unhappy Ending

[1.377] So far Aristotle has argued from theory that because it has the power to arouse pity and fear the unhappy ending is the suitable one for tragedy.... In the passage now under consideration (13. 53a 26-30) his appeal is to experience, which is the strongest of arguments and the most irrefutable of proofs, asserting that if two tragedies, one of which has a happy and the other an unhappy ending, are staged to test their relative effectiveness,¹ the one with the unhappy ending, if not faulty in other respects, will move the audience to pity and fear, which is the highest function of tragedy, and the other will not. Now, to grasp the full meaning of Aristotle's contention, we must observe that certain devices which reason would sanction as of great efficacy in producing the proper effect of an art are shown by experience to be of little efficacy to that end, to be, in fact, of a kind to nullify it. To take an example that will not divert our attention from the art of poetry, reason says that we are more deeply stirred by what we see than by what we hear. Since poets strive with all their powers to move their audiences to pity and fear, it follows that they should represent murders and other deeds of horror on the stage so that they could be seen by the people. Yet they seldom do, and when they do they are made the objects of the people's censure. Their method is, rather, to introduce a messenger or other person to bring a report to the people's ears, for experience has shown that deeds of cruelty and horror cannot be set before the eyes of an audience without violence to verisimilitude and that when they are they move to laughter rather than to tears, producing the effect not of tragedy but of comedy. (If anyone doubts this let him attend some representation of the Passion of Our Lord, especially the one to be seen in Rome, and let him contain his laughter if he can.)² There are devices, however, to whose great efficacy in producing the proper effect of an art, not only reason but experience bears witness. One of these is the unhappy ending in tragedies. Here experience confirms what reason has discovered, that the unhappy ending is of very great efficacy in arousing pity and fear. In fact experience attests that a tragedy with

a happy ending does not and cannot produce those emotions. Since experience, then, which in the arts is the best of proofs and should be our only appeal, shows that unhappy endings are best for tragedy, Aristotle concludes that we must accept its findings even if reason would have us believe otherwise. We have seen, however, that in this matter reason and experience support the same conclusion....

* * * * *

[1.376] What Aristotle has to say about the attitude of critics to Euripides (13. 53a 23-30) may be paraphrased thus: "Euripides has had many detractors, some of whom have found fault with him for one reason and some for another. But many have joined in blaming him for one fault, that of giving most of his tragedies unhappy endings, and they are guilty of a judgment that is both erroneous and unjust. For Euripides' reversals are, in fact, of the right kind, answering to the principle we have just laid down, that the most suitable reversal for a tragedy and the most commendable represents the fall of a person of ordinary virtue from happiness to misery. The reason for this is that though happy endings—whether they are so because none of the agents, be they extraordinarily virtuous or wicked or something between these extremes, fall from happiness to misery or because they rise from misery to happiness—are all unsuitable, not all unhappy endings are open to censure, that in fact the most commendable tragedies are those in which a person of ordinary virtue suffers a fall from happiness to misery, while no one condemns a tragedy in which a similar fall is suffered by a person of pre-eminent virtue. To put the matter simply, no critic can condemn the unhappy as he can the happy ending, for happy endings have no proper place in tragedy, whereas the ending of a tragedy cannot be commended unless it is unhappy...."

* * * * *

[1.381] If tragedies with unhappy endings are held to possess the perfection of tragedy, provided they are sound in every other respect, while such defects as they show in the other parts do not rob them of this distinction (for a tragedy with a happy ending but perfect in every other respect may justly be considered superior to one whose only virtue is the unhappy ending), why does Aristotle assert (13. 53a 28-30) that "though he is weak in the management of the other parts, Euripides appears [to be] the most tragic of poets" because many of his tragedies end unhappily?... Why, I say, does Aristotle maintain that the unhappy ending lends to tragedies the power of producing a perfect tragic effect only on condition that they are sound in other respects, and at the same time affirm that Euripides' endings render his plays perfectly tragic and make him the greatest of tragic poets, though they fail to meet the condition just laid down? To clear Aristotle of an apparent self-contradiction we will point out that by asserting that Euripides is the greatest master of tragedy because of his unhappy endings and despite the fact that his tragedies are imperfect in

other respects it is not Aristotle's intention to nullify his previous pronouncement, for he is merely asserting that Euripides surpasses all other poets only in giving his tragedies unhappy endings, which are the most suitable for tragedy and its most important feature; he is not asserting that tragedies with happy endings which are perfect in every other respect are inferior to the tragedies of Euripides. In this passage, then, Aristotle has in mind only the endings of tragedies; when he made the pronouncement which he now seems to contradict he had in mind the other parts of tragedy as well....

* * * * *

[1.382] Having shown that to be perfect a plot must meet five conditions³ and that a plot that meets them is to be ranked above all others that do not, Aristotle now (13. 53a 30-39) discusses the type of plot which so far he has only described as "double" and condemns at some length the opinion which he has previously condemned in few words, that the double plot should be ranked above and not below the single. He explains that some plots are called double because they have two types of agents, some bad and some of eminent or ordinary virtue, with a happy ending for the good and an unhappy one for the bad. This is the kind of plot found in the *Odyssey*, which has a double issue, happy for Ulysses and Telemachus and unhappy for the suitors and the maidservants. And it was esteemed more highly than the rest first because it had been favored by Homer, who chose it for his *Odyssey* as being the best and most satisfying of plots; secondly because it enjoyed the favor of the common people, who greatly rejoice to hear stories in which the good rise from misery to happiness and the wicked fall from happiness to misery; and finally because it had not been shunned by great tragic poets, who entered poetic competitions not only with tragedies on the subject of *Electra*, where the *dramatis personae* consisted of wicked personages (Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus) who fall from happiness to misery and of good though not superlatively good personages (Orestes and *Electra*) who rise from misery to happiness, but with many other tragedies having plots constructed on a similar pattern. On the other hand Aristotle observes that these are not single plots, which is to say that their characters are not all of one kind (all good or less than eminently good) and that they do not have a single issue (the unhappy) — two conditions which together have the power to arouse pity and fear, an effect that Aristotle holds to be required of all tragedies. But epic plots are not of necessity piteous and fear-inspiring, and bringing forward the example of the *Odyssey* therefore serves no useful purpose. Then, too, the pleasure sought in tragedy is not the direct but the indirect, and this type of pleasure can never proceed from the fall of the wicked and the rise of the good. Finally the choice of the double plot by poets who are held to be of eminent worth does not justify our ranking it above the plots that meet all five conditions, which for the reasons already given should be accorded the highest rank and be esteemed the most effective of all.

* * * * *

[1.383] The common people do not know that tragedy, comedy, and epic poetry should each offer its peculiar kind of pleasure, and by reason of what Aristotle here (13. 53a 34-35) calls their intellectual deficiencies, which is to say, their ignorance, they much prefer the pleasure afforded by epic poetry to that afforded by tragedy. Hence they bestow their praise on tragedies with untragic plots if only these plots are similar to those appropriate to epic poetry. Poets are aware of this preference, and being seekers after popular acclaim they compose plots of the kind that offer not indirect pleasure but the direct pleasure proper to epic poetry. The common people, then, prefer the double plot from ignorance, while poets make greater use of it than they do of the single (and consequently seem to favor it) not from ignorance but for gain, for it secures for them the esteem of the common people. This fact has led some to rank the double plot above the single.

* * * * *

[1.384] By asserting that the kind of pleasure offered by the *Odyssey* is proper to comedy rather than to tragedy (13. 53a 35-36) Aristotle answers a tacit question. He has held, contrary to the opinion of some, that double plots with their contrasting issues for the good and the bad are inferior to the single. But some one might well have asked why the author insists that double plots must have a double issue and will not concede that they may have a single happy issue for both the good and bad, for people take great pleasure in seeing persons of contrasting types and conflicting passions reconciled, as Romulus and Tatius (Plutarch, *Rom.* 19. 7) were after the last battle of the war between Rome and the Sabines. To which Aristotle replies that the pleasure afforded by the double plot with a happy ending for both kinds of characters is not common to both tragedy and comedy in the same way that the pleasure afforded by the double plot with a happy ending for the good and an unhappy one for the bad is common to both epic poetry and tragedy, but is by nature proper to comedy. The reason may be that in tragedy and epic poetry the characters are royal personages, who if at odds are deadly enemies and not the sort who characteristically forgive one another and become reconciled. Actions involving such personages cannot have a single happy issue for both the good and the bad; that kind of issue is possible only in comic actions, where the agents, as we have seen, are persons of no great moral strength and elevation whose quarrels are over trivialities....

* * * * *

IO

Tragic Pleasure and the Spectacle

[1.385] Aristotle recognizes four kinds of pleasure: (1) the indirect, which proceeds from the fall of a man of eminent or ordinary virtue from happiness to misery; (2) the direct, which proceeds from plots with a double issue, unhappy for the bad and happy for those of eminent or ordinary virtue; (3) what we will call "direct popular pleasure," which proceeds from plots with a single happy issue for persons of different types whom we first know as enemies; (4) and finally what we will call "pleasure in costly and elaborate stage properties," which proceeds from an awesome and terrifying spectacle. The first and second kinds of pleasure Aristotle holds to be appropriate to tragedy; the first he considers more tragic than the second and unsuited to comedy, and he condemns the third and fourth as quite untragic. Being already familiar with Aristotle's judgment on the pleasures of the first three kinds, it remains for us to acquaint ourselves with his judgment on that of the fourth [14. 53b 8-10]. The pleasure proceeding indirectly from pity and fear may be the effect of the plot or the spectacle, i.e. the stage scenery and the costumes. That being so, pity and fear may be said to be the immediate effects of the plot or the spectacle. But the pity and fear that proceed from the plot are to be judged of a kind superior to the pity and fear that proceed from the spectacle, and the man who composes a plot is to be assigned a higher rank among artists than the one who makes the things that constitute the spectacle. This may be proved in the following fashion: whatever can come into being and produce its effect in more than one way is to be judged superior to what can do both things in only one. But the pity and fear proceeding from the plot may come into being and produce their effect through the ears only or through both the eyes and the ears, while those that proceed from the spectacle produce their effect only through the eyes. Therefore the pity and fear that proceed from the plot are to be judged superior to those that proceed from the spectacle. Next, if of two artists one is awarded the higher rank because he regularly produces works that demand greater artistic acumen and more intellectual labor than the other's and entail less expense, it follows that the poet, whose piteous and fear-inspiring plots give evidence of a superior genius and cost nothing in the making, is to be ranked higher than the artist who makes costumes and produces stage scenery of a kind to arouse pity and fear, for the making of these accessories requires little genius and an unconscionable outlay of money. But merely pronouncing the fear, however paralyzing, and the pity aroused by the terrifying spectacle inferior to those aroused by the plot is not enough; the poet must abjure them as effects that it is not the nature of tragedy to produce. The pity and fear demanded of the poet are those that can proceed only from the plot and not such as can proceed from other arts or from the spectacle, which is the work of an art quite distinct from the art of tragedy.

Whether, in calculating the total effect of his tragedy, the poet should or

should not take into account the pity and fear aroused by the spectacle ought to have been discussed, unless I am deceived, in the following fashion. Some tragedies can be mounted with few costumes, little expense, and no unusual stage sets. A tragedy of this sort is *Oedipus the King*, the action of which can be communicated to the audience by little more than the language. Others, on the other hand, can be mounted only with a great variety of costumes, much expense, and elaborate stage sets. Tragedies of this sort are the *Eumenides* and the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus, in the first of which the chorus of Furies must appear in eerie transformations, while in the second Prometheus must be chained to a replica of Mount Caucasus and must be visited by a number of different deities. Now what induces the poet to accept or reject a plot of either type is not the greater or lesser pity and fear that can be inspired by the spectacle, but the manner or the cause of the tragic agent's fall into misfortune. Thus Oedipus lay with his mother. That in itself does not move to pity and fear, as proved by the fact that, though Ninus (Orosius, *Hist.* 4. 39) also lay with his mother, no one finds his incest either piteous or fear-inspiring. What affects us in the story of Oedipus is not his incest but the *manner* in which he came to be caught in it. Again, the Furies pursued Orestes because he had slain his mother. That in itself does not move to pity and fear; if it did we should find it piteous and fear-inspiring that the Furies pursued Nero, who also slew his mother.¹ What affects us in Orestes' story is the *cause* of his suffering, which, since his mother deserved her death, we feel is somehow unjust. Thus the more horrible the suffering represented by the spectacle the stronger the pity and fear it will inspire provided its manner or cause is of a kind to produce that effect. And so the spectacle is not to be spurned because it is the work of an art other than that of poetry or because it entails great expense or because the poet is an artist of higher rank than the costumier. The one relevant consideration is whether a proposed piteous and fear-inspiring spectacle can be staged realistically; if that is impossible, as it is when the subject is a murder or an obscenity, it must be rejected....

* * * * *

[1.388] When Aristotle asserts (14. 53b 3-6) that "the plot should be so constructed that one who hears the story without seeing it is moved to pity and fear by the things narrated there," he seems to do so with the intention in mind of teaching the reader how to recognize a plot that arouses pity and fear by itself and not wholly or partly by means of the spectacle. His directions are that we should read, not stage, the tragedy and that if reading it we feel moved to pity and fear we must believe that things are as they should be and that the tragic emotions proceed from the right source; if we do not, we must conclude that something is amiss. Both here and elsewhere Aristotle expresses the opinion that a tragedy gives as much pleasure when read as when seen and heard. This is false doctrine, and I shall offer my reasons for so judging it in the proper place ... (p. 312).

* * * * *

[1.390] Two types of pleasure have been found unsuited to tragedy, that derived from a plot in which two enemies of quite different type are finally reconciled, which is proper to comedy, and that derived from a spectacle that inspires pity and fear or, if composed of monstrous elements, an emotion stronger than fear, which is caused, as we have seen, by arts other than that of tragedy. Now if the end of tragedy is to arouse pity and fear, it is reasonable that we should not seek in tragedy the pleasure peculiar to comedy. But it is not reasonable for us to eliminate the spectacle as a source of tragic pleasure, since the spectacle not only may be a part of the tragedy, but is in fact necessary to it if it is to attain its perfection, which it does when it is staged with an appropriate spectacle. To this we may say that Aristotle does not deny that the spectacle is a natural concomitant of tragedies when they are performed in public or that, following the requirements of the plot, it should be of a kind to arouse pity and fear. What he means when he asserts (14. 53b 10-11) that "we must not seek every kind of pleasure in tragedy but only its peculiar kind of pleasure" is that a poet must never choose a plot for no other reason than that it offers opportunities for a spectacle capable of arousing pity and fear; his first concern should be that the plot is of a kind to arouse these emotions, and he should leave the production of an appropriate spectacle to others. The proper pleasure of tragedy, therefore, is that which derives from the pity and fear proceeding from the reversal of fortune suffered through some error by a person of ordinary virtue.

At this point some one may ask what kind of pleasure it is that we feel in seeing a good man falling unjustly from happiness to misery. A story of this kind, they say, should normally be the cause not of pleasure but of sorrow. Now there is not the shadow of a doubt that by "pleasure" Aristotle means the purgation and expulsion of pity and fear from human souls by the action, which we have already described at some length (III. 1), of these same emotions. But if this purgation and expulsion are effected, as he affirms, by the action of pity and fear, it is patently absurd to speak of it as a kind of pleasure. It is rightly to be designated, rather, as a moral benefit, for its effect is by nature health of soul produced by the action of very bitter medicine. The authentic pleasure which derives from the experience of pity and fear we ourselves have called "indirect pleasure" (p. 164). We call it indirect because it is not the *direct* result of the experience of a tragic event. The immediate effect upon us of such events, which depict the unjust sufferings of others, is, in fact, one of sadness; this sadness, however, being caused, as it is, by injustice, brings us to a recognition of our goodness, and it is this recognition that, thanks to the love we naturally bear ourselves, becomes the cause of very great pleasure. To this pleasure is added another that is not inconsiderable and springs from the private and unarticulated discovery, occasioned by our observation of the unjust sufferings of other men that may also visit us and others like us, that we are subject to many misfortunes and that no man should rest his trust in a tranquil course of the things of this world. Discovering these truths by our

own effort yields a greater pleasure than learning them from someone who should impart them to us verbally and in public in the capacity of a master, for the experience of actualities imprints doctrine on the soul more deeply than the mere voice of any master. Then, too, it gives us greater pleasure to learn a little by our own efforts than a great deal from others, for we cannot begin to learn from others without first confessing our ignorance of that which we desire to know and then being left with a sense of obligation to them for what they have taught us. It is perhaps with an eye to all this that the Preacher (Eccl. 7:2) has said that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting....

II

Happiness and Misery as Ends of Tragedy and Comedy

[I.296] The end of tragedy is happiness or misery, but not happiness or misery of every kind, for as we shall see these differ according as they are produced by tragic or comic incidents. The happiness produced by tragedy is the kind a person knows when he himself or some one dear to him is saved from death or is released from suffering or avoids a fall from the rank of royalty. Tragic misery, on the other hand, is restricted to the kind a person knows when he himself or some one dear to him suffers death or is plunged into suffering or falls from the rank of royalty. The happiness produced by comedy is the kind a person knows when he has succeeded in putting an end to the scorn to which he himself or persons dear to him have been subjected, in blotting out some disgrace which had been thought ineffaceable, in recovering some lost person or thing dear to him, or in achieving the satisfaction of amorous desire. Comic misery, on the other hand, is restricted to the misery a person knows when he himself or some one dear to him is made the object of mild scorn, suffers some mild disgrace or the loss of a few possessions, is thwarted in love, or is otherwise made somewhat unhappy.

Why cannot comedy and tragedy have the same kind of happiness or misery as their ends? The answer is to be sought in the differences between tragic and comic agents. Tragic agents are royal personages. They are high-spirited and haughty, and what they desire they desire immoderately. If they suffer or think they suffer an injury they neither seek redress from the magistrates nor possess their souls in patience, but settle their own accounts as their passions dictate, vengefully slaying persons closely or distantly related to them by blood, and sometimes in desperation even turning their hand against themselves. Being of royal rank, which is held to be the summit of human

felicity, and enjoying the power to avenge personal injuries, they are never made the objects of even mild scorn or derision and are neither ruffled by the loss of a few possessions nor ever subjected to such loss by others. Their habitual good cheer is not augmented by a marriage or the satisfaction of amorous desires, for they may truly be said to live in perpetual nuptials and in continuous amorous pleasures and therefore cannot rise to a happy state unless they have first fallen from their former felicity or at least have been in clear danger of doing so. On the other hand they cannot know unhappiness unless they are plunged into misery or fall from their high estate in truly memorable fashion.

Comic agents, on the other hand, are faint hearted. They are in the habit of obeying the magistrates, of conforming to the laws, of submitting to injuries and losses, and of seeking redress for the loss of honor or possessions from the authorities and their ordinances. They never take matters in their own hands, nor resort to the slaying of strangers, kinsmen, or themselves for the reasons that such measures are resorted to by kings. Being poor and of low condition, they need not fall from a former felicity before they can rise to a happy state, for their happiness is far from total and can be augmented by a moderate stroke of good fortune, such as a desired marriage and the like. On the other hand they may be made unhappy by the loss of a few possessions or some mild abuse. These are the reasons why the happiness and unhappiness which are the ends of tragedy differ from those which are the end of comedy.

If I am asked why comedy cannot deal with the rise of a private person to a throne, of which some instances are recorded in history, I reply first that a plot of this kind is appropriate to tragedy and not to comedy and that for the reasons already given (p. 94) it could not properly be invented outright but would have to be taken from history, and secondly that performances of it would give little pleasure in republics and even less in monarchies: in republics because men who love freedom and are determined to preserve it cannot desire that their fellow-citizens witness the example of a private person usurping a throne, and in monarchies because being jealous of their royal state kings guard against setting before the common people and private citizens examples of actions that might awaken in them the desire to overthrow the monarchy and establish a new order. Kings, in fact, invariably forbid the public performance of tragedies, for they know that the common people rejoice at the misfortunes of the great, and tragedies are never performed except among people who are not subject to a single ruler. The end of tragedy, then, is either happiness or misery. But since in a tragedy whose end is happiness the royal personage is normally exposed to some great peril, this type of tragedy produces pity and fear as well as happiness, so that the happiness, as we shall show, is not without an admixture of unhappiness. It remains true, however, that the tragedy best fitted to arouse pity and fear is the one that has misery for its end. The end of tragedy, then, is happiness or misery, the kind of each that we have described as suitable to tragedy.

12

Plots and their Emotional Effects

[1.351] Before opening his discussion of the type of person best fitted to arouse pity and fear, Aristotle repeats (13. 52b 30-33) two earlier observations: that the plot must be not simple but complex and that it must imitate actions arousing pity and fear. To understand how these two observations may contribute to the discovery of the type of person we are in search of, we must understand that a simple plot may imitate a pleasing action, as a bad person in a continuing state of misery or a good person in a continuing state of happiness, or a displeasing one, as a bad person in a continuing state of happiness or a good person in a continuing state of misery. Of these, only the action which represents a good man in a continuing state of misery is capable of arousing pity and fear, so that a plot imitating actions of that sort will arouse those emotions. A complex plot may likewise imitate a pleasing or a displeasing action. It imitates a pleasing action when it represents a good person rising from misery to happiness or a bad person falling from happiness to misery. It imitates a displeasing action when it represents a good person falling from happiness to misery or a bad person rising from misery to happiness. Of these, only the action which represents a good man falling from happiness to misery is capable of arousing pity and fear, so that a plot with a reversal of that sort will arouse those emotions.

Now since a simple or a complex plot may contain not only one good or one bad person, but both a good person and a bad, let us inquire which simple and which complex plots having characters of both types are capable of arousing pity and fear. Simple plots containing one good and one bad person are of four kinds, according as (1) both persons are in a continuing state of happiness; (2) both persons are in a continuing state of misery; (3) the good person is in a continuing state of happiness and the bad in a continuing state of misery; (4) the good person is in a continuing state of misery and the bad in a continuing state of happiness. Plots containing situations of the types (1) and (3) are incapable of arousing pity and fear; these emotions, on the other hand, may be aroused by plots containing situations of the types (2) and (4), and by the latter of these more effectively than by the former. The reason is that a companion in misery alleviates suffering, so that when a bad person suffers along with a good, the good person's suffering seems to be less intense than when he suffers while the other is happy. Hence two types of the simple plot containing both good characters and bad may be filled with the kind of incidents that arouse pity and fear.

Complex plots containing a good and a bad person are also of four kinds according as (1) both persons pass from misery to happiness; (2) both persons pass from happiness to misery; (3) the good person passes from misery to happiness and the bad from happiness to misery; (4) the good person passes from happiness to misery and the bad from misery to happiness. Plots containing

situations of types (1) and (3) are incapable of arousing pity and fear, which may be aroused by plots containing situations of types (2) and (4).

But since a simple or a complex plot may contain two persons of the same type, i.e., both good or both bad, it follows that a plot containing two such characters may be of any one of six kinds. A simple plot containing two bad persons may be of three kinds according as it represents (1) both persons in a continuing state of misery or (2) in a continuing state of happiness; (3) one person in a continuing state of misery and the other in a continuing state of happiness. If it contains two good persons it may be of three additional kinds, according as it represents (4) both persons in a continuing state of misery or (5) in a continuing state of happiness; (6) one in a continuing state of misery and the other in a continuing state of happiness. Only plots containing situations of the types (4) and (6) are capable of arousing pity and fear.

When a simple plot is combined with a complex the resulting plot may be of sixteen kinds. When it contains a good person and a bad, it may be of eight kinds, according as (1) the simple plot represents a good person in a continuing state of happiness and the complex a bad person passing from misery to happiness; (2) the simple plot represents a good person in a continuing state of happiness and the complex a bad person passing from happiness to misery; (3) the simple plot represents a good person in a continuing state of misery and the complex a bad person passing from misery to happiness; (4) the simple plot represents a good person in a continuing state of misery and the complex a bad person passing from happiness to misery; (5) the simple plot represents a bad person in a continuing state of happiness and the complex a good person passing from misery to happiness; (6) the simple plot represents a bad person in a continuing state of happiness and the complex a good person passing from happiness to misery; (7) the simple plot represents a bad person in a continuing state of misery and the complex a good person passing from misery to happiness; (8) the simple plot represents a bad person in a continuing state of misery and the complex a good person passing from happiness to misery. Pity and fear may be aroused by plots (3), (4), (6), and (8).

When a combined simple and complex plot contains two good or two bad persons it may be of eight more kinds, according as (1) the simple plot represents a good person in a continuing state of happiness and the complex another good person passing from misery to happiness; (2) the simple plot represents a good person in a continuing state of happiness and the complex another good person passing from happiness to misery; (3) the simple plot represents a good person in a continuing state of misery and the complex another good person passing from happiness to misery; (4) the simple plot represents a good person in a continuing state of misery and the complex another good person passing from misery to happiness; (5) the simple plot represents a bad person in a continuing state of happiness and the complex another bad person passing from misery to happiness; (6) the simple plot represents a bad person in a continuing state of happiness and the complex another bad person passing from happiness to misery; (7) the simple plot represents a bad person in a continuing state of misery and the complex another

bad person passing from misery to happiness; (8) the simple plot represents a bad person in a continuing state of misery and the complex another bad person passing from happiness to misery. Of these plots only three — (2), (3), (4) — are capable of arousing pity and fear.

These considerations lead to three conclusions. (1) The simple plot is in no way inferior to the complex as an instrument for arousing pity and fear, for there are as many kinds of simple plots capable of arousing pity and fear as there are of complex, namely five; and the tragic emotions are also aroused by seven kinds of plots in which the simple and the complex plot are found in combination. (2) The power to arouse pity and fear is no more peculiar to the complex plot than it is to the simple, whether considered by itself or in combination with the complex. (3) The complex plot which represents only one person or two persons of the same kind is not to be judged superior to the complex plot which represents two persons of different kinds and is not better fitted to arouse pity and fear. Our contention may be proved thus. If the complex plot is to be considered better fitted than the simple to arouse pity and fear, surely that is because the contrast between the good person's early happiness and later misery renders that misery more affecting, and this contrast does not exist in a simple plot, where a good person is represented in a continuing state of misery. Therefore a complex plot representing two persons of contrasting types must be better fitted to arouse pity and fear than a complex plot representing only one person or two persons of the same type, at least when the good person falls from happiness to misery and the bad rises from misery to happiness. If, then, a complex plot that represents one person or two persons of the same type contains only the one contrast described above, and is by virtue of that contrast better fitted than a simple plot to arouse pity and fear, it follows that a complex plot representing two persons of contrasting types contains two contrasts, one between the fortunes of the good person who falls from happiness to misery and the other between those of the bad person who rises from misery to happiness. We leave it to the reader to judge whether two such contrasts will not act more powerfully than one upon our pity and fear.

As we proceed with our commentary on Aristotle's text it will become apparent that these three conclusions will not permit us to accept certain observations of Aristotle's as unquestionably true....

* * * * *

[1.359] Aristotle has established that the tragic plot must be complex. But since many complex plots do not contain and do not imitate piteous and fear-inspiring actions, he now adds (13. 52b 32-33) that the complex plot proper to tragedy "must imitate incidents that arouse pity and fear." Now whether a tragedy must be composed only of incidents that arouse those emotions is a question that I will not consider further at this point, but it seems to me certain that Aristotle has not yet proved his contention, though he assumes that he has. Aristotle set out to contradict Plato, who had contended that

tragedy undermines the people's moral habits. With this purpose in mind he withholds approval from every type of tragedy but that which, in his opinion, effects the moral improvement of the people, purging their souls of pity and fear by the actions of these emotions in the manner we described earlier (III. 1) and he is so intent on contradicting Plato that he fails to notice that he contradicts opinions he himself advanced on earlier pages. For if poetry was invented principally for pleasure and not utility, as he demonstrated in discussing poetry in general, why would he have us go to tragedy, which is a species of poetry, principally for its utility? Why not go to it principally for pleasure and disregard utility, of which, if we follow his earlier counsel, we should either take no account whatever or not so much that we should reject every kind of tragedy that cannot provide it? Then, too, Aristotle restricts himself to a single kind of utility, namely the purgation of pity and fear. Yet if utility is not to be ignored, there are other kinds of tragedies that could be performed for the people's edification, as, for instance, those that represent the good as rising from misery to happiness or the bad as falling from happiness to misery, both of them examples that could reasonably confirm the people in the pious opinion that God watches over the affairs of men and that He is especially solicitous about His own, protecting them and confounding both His enemies and theirs....

* * * * *

[2.112] Aristotle says (23.59 17-21) that a tragedy should be so constructed as to produce "its own peculiar pleasure." Let those who hold that the principal end of poetry is utility, or both utility and pleasure, beware lest they find themselves in opposition to the authority of Aristotle, who here as elsewhere does not seem to assign to it any other end than that of pleasure; and if he concedes to it a certain utility he regards it as an incidental thing, like the purgation of pity and fear through tragedy.

13

Actions and Sufferings of Tragic Agents

[1.298] We now proceed to a discussion of the type of person best suited to be the principal agent in a tragedy, the one who experiences the misery or happiness which results from the actions that constitute the plot. Tragic agents are of three types: those who act, those who suffer, and those who both act and suffer. Jephtha (Judges 11:29ff.) acts by sacrificing his daughter in fulfilment of his rash vow; his daughter suffers by being sacrificed. Ajax both acts and suffers by taking his own life. And since we recognize the unhappiness of these

persons by what they do or suffer and know it to be more or less intense as the causes of their sufferings are more or less just, we are obliged to discuss not only what they do and suffer but also the reasons why.

The cause that moves men to action is of two kinds, the first of which aims at a good or a putative good and the second at an evil or a putative evil. The cause that aims at a good is likewise of two kinds, for men are moved to action either to secure a good they do not possess or to retain one already in their possession. Thus, to secure a good, the enjoyment of Aegisthus, Clytaemnestra acts villainously by yielding to her depraved passion, committing adultery by breaking faith with her husband and incest by cohabiting with her kinsman; to retain the good she had secured she acts villainously by murdering Agamemnon and banishing Orestes from his father's realm. The cause that aims at an evil is likewise of two kinds, for men are moved to act to fend off a future evil or to remove a present one. Thus after her advances were rebuffed by Hippolytus, Phaedra, fearing that future disclosures would expose her to infamy and injury, seeks to fend off these evils by villainously accusing the innocent Hippolytus to his father Theseus, thereby kindling Theseus' wrath against him and instigating the father to compass the death of his good, beautiful, and blameless son. Later finding herself in the throes of the intolerable mental anguish and tortured conscience that she had brought upon herself by yielding to an unlawful and odious passion, accusing an innocent youth of a crime he had never committed, and causing his death by her lies, the same Phaedra seeks to remove that present evil by hanging herself.

Men remove present evils by wreaking vengeance on others (Medea wreaks vengeance on Jason by slaying her children), by punishing them (Torquatus [Livy 8. 6-7] condemns his son to death), or by exchanging a greater evil for a lesser one (Phaedra hangs herself). They fend off future evils unjustly (Phaedra falsely accuses Hippolytus of seduction to avoid an evil name) or with apparent justice (Hercules slays his wife and children mistaking them for wild beasts). They secure and preserve a good unjustly (Clytaemnestra secures a good by unchastely giving herself to Aegisthus; she preserves that good by slaying Agamemnon and banishing Orestes from his father's realm) or for an apparently justifiable reason (Oedipus becomes king of Thebes by marrying Jocasta, whom he mistook for a strange woman; Canace [Ovid, *Heroides* 11] seeks to conceal her incest and thereby preserve her good name by sending the child whom she has borne secretly from home).

So much for the causes of men's actions. As for the actions themselves, they are of five kinds: the villainous (Phaedra suing for her stepson's love), the villainous and horrible (Medea slaying her innocent children), the agonizing (Peleus, [Diodorus Sic., *Bibliotheca Historica* 4. 72. 6], wandering over the earth, banished from his mother country for the murder of his brother Phocus), those that may be called pardonable (Lucretia [Livy 1. 58] yielding against her will to Tarquinius' unbridled passion so as not to die in disgrace), and the horrible. Horrible actions are of four kinds. Some horrible deeds are done under constraint or virtual constraint, as when Cato [Plutarch, *Cato* 70] takes his own life and Orestes slays his mother. Neither of these men was at all wick-

ed, so that both must have acted under constraint. Some horrible deeds are not wicked because they are done in ignorance. Oedipus' murder of Laius and his marriage to Jocasta are horrible but not wicked, for Oedipus did not know that Laius and Jocasta were his parents, and they did not know him to be their son. Some horrible deeds are not wicked because they are done by persons with deranged minds, as when the mad Hercules slays his wife and children and the mad Athamas (Hyginus, *Fab.* 4. 5) his son. Finally, some horrible deeds are not wicked because they are accidental, as when Peleus [Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3. 13. 2] hurling his javelin at a boar struck his very dear friend Eurytus and killed him, and Adrastus (Herodotus 1. 43) also at the chase accidentally slew his lord Atys, son of Croesus.

It remains for us to discuss suffering. Suffering is of two kinds, physical and mental. Physical suffering consists in being slain, like Laius; being wounded, like Philoctetes; being cruelly bound, as was Prometheus on Mount Caucasus; being violated, like Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1ff.), etc. Mental suffering is the kind experienced by Theseus when he came to believe that his son Hippolytus had violated his stepmother and by Aeolus (Ovid, *Heroides* 11. 71ff.) when he learned that his children Canace and Macarues had committed incest. Again, suffering may be held to be deserved, as when Canace is slain (Hyginus, *Fab.* 283); undeserved, as when the innocent child of Canace and Macareus is slain (*Heroides* 11. 83ff.); and unjustly inflicted upon someone who is really worthy of some reward, as when Hippolytus, who should have been rewarded for his virtue, was unjustly made to suffer death.

An action is the effect of a cause and is itself the cause of suffering. This suffering may become the cause of another action, which in turn causes more suffering, so that a plot may contain a whole chain of causes, actions, and sufferings. Thus the hope of satisfying her flaming passion drove Phaedra to the evil course of seeking her stepson's love. Phaedra's crime caused Hippolytus mental suffering, and that suffering induced him to make the painful choice of abandoning his country and his father's royal palace. Hippolytus' departure caused Phaedra mental suffering, by which she was driven to the evil device of unjustly accusing him of violating her. Phaedra's accusation now generated mental suffering in Theseus, by which he was incited to call a terrible curse upon his son, who was worthy of every blessing. That curse became the cause of the suffering endured by Hippolytus as he dies a most cruel death, and that suffering drove Phaedra to hang herself, a horrible action that brought merited suffering upon her head.

We have considered these matters so as to know the types of persons best fitted to be represented as principals in tragic drama, the persons whose actions and sufferings arouse pity and fear in the members of an audience. Let us now consider separately (1) those who affect us by their actions and (2) those who affect us by their sufferings. Persons who act from motives which they know to be unjust cannot move an audience to pity and to fear, for no one can believe of himself that he will ever desire to inflict an injustice upon another. To arouse those emotions in us, people must act from just motives, as does Torquatus (Livy 8. 6-7), who ordered the decapitation of his son for

disobeying the command he had issued as captain of the Roman host. But deeds of horror produce greater fear than does Torquatus' action and are worthier of greater pity when they are done by persons who erroneously believe that they are doing no wrong, as when the insane Hercules slew his wife and children, mistaking them for wild beasts. And the pity and fear are even greater when the deed of horror is done by persons whose weapons miss their intended marks, as when Peleus slew his friend Eurytus (Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3. 13. 2) and Adrastus his lord Atys (Herodotus 1. 43), each with a spear he had aimed at a boar, and greater still when it is done by persons who fail to recognize the other person involved in their action, as does Cinyras (Ovid, *Met.* 10. 298ff.) who unwittingly committed incest with his daughter. But they are greatest when a person ignorantly commits the very crime he has been striving to avoid, as did Oedipus, who, fleeing, as he thought, from his father and his mother to avoid the guilt of parricide and incest, actually advanced to an encounter first with the one and then with the other, and failing to recognize either fell into the very crimes he most abhorred. Why this last kind of action is the most piteous and fearful will be explained presently. These, then, are the five types of agents whose actions have the power of arousing pity and fear and these the varying degrees of pity and fear that are aroused by their actions....

Pity and fear are also aroused by those who suffer, but not by all. They are not aroused by merited suffering — by Clytaemnestra's death, for instance — for ordinary men do not believe that they will ever commit a crime calling for such retribution. Nor are they aroused by all who suffer unduly. The exceptions are persons who take their own lives even though they have done nothing to merit death. Valerius Maximus (*Facta et Dicta* 2. 5. 8), for instance, tells of a very good and very wise woman of Iulis in the island of Ceos who having lived a long and happy life chose to end it by taking poison in the presence of himself and Sextus Pompeius, a noble citizen of Rome. The sufferings of such persons fail to excite pity and fear because everyone recognizes them as self-inflicted and no one believes that he will ever freely inflict like sufferings upon himself. Then, too, those who commit suicide under total or partial constraint or as victims of deception seem in some fashion to deserve their deaths because they do not value life as highly as they should. There is also a type of suffering that may move us to pity but not to fear; it is that of persons who not only should be spared all suffering but should in justice be rewarded for their fervent love of their native land. Of this type are the sufferings of Curtius (Livy 7. 6), who, to promote his country's welfare flung himself fully armed into a chasm in the Forum, and of the Decii (Livy 8. 9; 10. 28), who freely offered themselves as sacrificial victims for the safety of their countrymen. Some forms of suffering, then, may move us to fear and not to pity and others to pity and not to fear. We are moved to fear when the suffering is of the kind that we ourselves may be easily subjected to, and of pity when we feel that it is undeserved. The sufferings of Curtius and the Decii fail to strike fear into us because we know them to be voluntary; they are such as cannot touch us unless we deliberately seek them. But they move us to

great pity because we feel that men so brave and so zealous for the public good did not deserve to die. On the other hand the suffering of a wicked man who, for example, is struck down by a falling tree will not move us to pity because men of his ilk deserve all that and more; it will, however, strike fear into us because our being less wicked than he will not exempt us from a like accident under another tree. Next, people who do not deserve their sufferings, as, for instance, the innocent, are deserving of pity. They may be divided into two classes: those who do not deserve to suffer (Medea's children and Canace's child) and those who not only do not deserve to suffer but are worthy of rewards (Hippolytus). People of the second type move us to greater pity than those of the first because their sufferings are less deserved. Moreover the more probable the situation the greater the fear aroused in us by those who suffer because of it. Thus Medea's children deserve their sufferings as little as do the children of Hercules, yet the death of Hercules' children strikes greater fear into our hearts because a madman is much more likely to slay his children than is a person of sound mind.

Unless I am deceived this discussion will have clearly brought out not only the kinds of persons whose actions and sufferings will arouse pity and fear but also who among them are more or less capable than others of producing that effect. As a result we have also discovered the kinds of persons best fitted to be represented as principals in a tragedy....

* * * * *

[1.374] Aristotle observes (13. 53a 17-22) that the earlier poets found their tragedies in the histories of any and all families whose members had known a change of fortune from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness, or had never known a change from one state to the other. But he adds that in his own day poets found their best plots in the histories of a few families whose members could meet the five requirements for the tragic agent: (that he must be neither among the best nor the worst of men, that he must fall from happiness to misery, that his fall must be caused by error and not by wrongdoing, that he must be the member of a noble and famous family, and that he must be the only person in the tragedy who falls from happiness to misery or one of not more than two, the second of whom must be neither morally better nor worse than he).¹ On the other hand, the tragic agent may meet only the single requirement of suffering a reversal from happiness to misery, which explains why Aristotle takes pains to add, "and all who have either done or suffered some deed of horror."

Although in our search for the type of person best fitted to be a tragic agent we have already discussed at great length painful and horrible actions and sufferings and their causes and have in addition grouped our findings into separate categories, in our desire to grasp the full significance of the words just quoted we shall not on that account desist at this point from offering another classification of suffering or tragic agents, with the understanding that this is not done to render the matter more obscure. A tragic agent suffers

through what he does or has done to him. The cause of what he does or has done to him may reside in himself or in others. If it resides in himself his actions or sufferings are either intentional or unintentional. If unintentional they may be due to madness (Hercules, Athamas, Ajax), to failure to identify a person (Oedipus, Cinyras), to the ignorance of a fact (Theseus did not know that Hippolytus was not guilty of forcing his stepmother to commit incest nor Deianira that the tunic she sent to Hercules was poisoned), or to some other error, as when a spear misses its mark (Peleus, Adrastus). If they are horrible they may or may not lead to another deed of horror. They do not for Hercules and Theseus, and do for Oedipus and Jocasta, the first of whom puts out his own eyes and the second hangs herself. If they are not horrible they lead to a deed of horror, as they do for Ajax. If they are intentional and not due to some error they are blameworthy (Herod is to be blamed for the death of Mariamne)² or laudable (we praise Curtius and the Decii).

If the cause for the tragic person's actions or sufferings resides in some other person, that is because he has given that other just cause for retribution (Atreus served up the flesh of Thyestes' children to him as retribution for the many injuries he had received from him) or despite the fact that no offense had been committed against those who cause the suffering (neither Hecuba nor Andromache had done wrong to the Greeks, yet both suffered at their hands, the first through the death of Polyxena and the second through that of Astyanax) or despite the fact that what had been done should have earned the doer a reward and not an injury (Dido was ungratefully abandoned by Aeneas, whom she had welcomed to her shores, where he had been cast after being cruelly tossed in stormy seas; and the death of Polydorus was for Hecuba a poor reward for her faith in Polymnestor). In the stories of Dido and Hecuba we have an example of persons led by their sufferings to inflict new sufferings on themselves or to act against others, for Dido took her own life and Hecuba blinded Polymnestor. . . .

I4

Tragic Character

[1.360] Aristotle now (13. 52b 34–53a 12) inquires into and discovers the nature of the tragic person, i.e., the kind of person who by falling from happiness to misery or rising from misery to happiness will most effectively arouse the emotions of pity and fear. His procedure is first to divide all persons into three groups, the pre-eminently good, the extremely wicked, and the ordinarily virtuous, and then to show that the common people are not moved to pity and fear when the pre-eminently good and the extremely wicked fall from happiness to misery or rise from misery to happiness, but only when persons of

ordinary virtue fall from happiness to misery. He therefore concludes that the truly tragic person is the person of ordinary virtue represented as falling from happiness to misery.

Before we proceed further we must note that in this inquiry Aristotle seems to assume that God watches with special care over individual persons and particularly over those of pre-eminent virtue. This seems to be the assumption underlying the prohibition he lays upon the poet against representing men of very holy life¹ as falling from happiness to misery, for that phenomenon would be neither piteous nor fear-inspiring but abominable, i.e., it would be such as to induce men to believe that God did not exercise a special providence over his true servants, that He was an unjust God, withholding their true reward from those who render Him due honor and permitting their fall from happiness to misery. Yet in his *Metaphysics*² the same Aristotle affirms that the divine intellect would stoop too low and demean itself if it took notice of all individual things and exercised a special care over each. The two doctrines could be rightly taken as contradictory were it not for the fact that the one met in the *Metaphysics* is Aristotle's own, whereas the one advanced in the *Poetics* simply reflects the belief commonly held by the populace, which is quite different from his. The fact is that in considering the matter under discussion there was no need for him to take his own opinion into account but only that held by the common people, for whom tragedies are performed.

Returning to our subject, I am unable to understand why the fall of a man of very holy life from happiness to misery should not arouse pity and fear; why it should not, in fact, arouse greater pity and fear than the fall of a man of ordinary virtue, for those whose lives are not of a holiness comparable to his, as the lives of the common people generally are not, are more terrified and dismayed by the sufferings of one better than themselves than by those of one of their own kind. The experience of such a fall would fill them with the fear that they may well be visited by a similar misfortune, bringing before their minds the Gospel text (Luke 23:31), "For if they do these things in a green tree, what should be done in the dry?" And who shall be pitied if not the saintly man who falls into misfortune? For if we are moved to pity by those who suffer unjustly, who deserves misfortune less than the man of most saintly life? None assuredly, and the representation of a supremely saintly man falling from happiness to misery should not therefore have been rejected as incapable of moving audiences to pity and fear. Yet Aristotle asserts that the fall of such a man does not fill us with pity and fear but with indignation against God, which is a blasphemous state of mind. To which I reply that if we are filled with indignation against God it does not follow that we are not also filled with pity and fear. The indignation does not extinguish the pity and fear. When, for example, a person of ordinary virtue is unjustly injured by some one, we feel indignation against the latter, but do not for that reason fail to be moved to pity and fear by the undeserved suffering of the injured man. Who is there that does not hate Phaedra, the false accuser of Hippolytus to his father, and is not at the same time moved to pity and fear by Hippolytus' death, which is a consequence of that accusation?

At this point someone may protest, "I concede to you that the fall of a man of holy life from happiness to misery will move people to pity and fear if you will concede to me that it will also move them to indignation against God. But that indignation is blasphemous, and to avoid it we must eschew the kind of reversal involving that kind of person and renounce all the pity and all the fear that it might generate." To which one may briefly reply that the common people, who believe that God rules the world and watches over all individual things, exercising a special care over each, believe also that He is just in all his actions and makes all things redound to His own glory and to the good of His faithful servants. Therefore when they witness the suffering of a holy man they do not forthwith revile and blaspheme God and accuse Him of injustice, but turning their hate against the immediate causes which by God's permissive will had the power to work the holy man's hurt, they absolve God of all blame, and unable to conceive of Him as the author of evil, explain the holy man's suffering in one of a number of ways. They may imagine that he appears to be more holy than he really is and that he is justly punished as a hypocrite. Or, since no one is quite without sin, they may believe that he has fallen into sins which God as a just judge will not allow to go unpunished. Or they may think that he has been tried by misfortune so that he may become more perfect, as gold is refined in the fire. Or they may reason that he has been ill treated because God chose this way to manifest His glory, making his fall the occasion of raising him up again in this world or of reserving greater rewards for him in the next. In short they will ascribe the good man's suffering to any cause except God's injustice and will humble themselves before His might without resistance and without struggle. The fact is that if, on witnessing the fall of a just man, the people were truly moved to indignation and truly fixed the blame on God, they would respond in precisely the same manner to the unjust sufferings of a person of ordinary virtue, for in so far as the latter suffers unjustly he does so by God's permissive will. Yet Aristotle never asserts that the suffering of such a man is an abomination.

* * * * *

[1.363] Having shown that the fall of a pre-eminently virtuous person from happiness to misery does not constitute an authentic tragedy, Aristotle continues by asserting (13. 52b 36-38) that "extremely wicked persons [must not be represented as rising] from misery to happiness," adding that such plots are "the most remote from tragedy." What Aristotle contends, in effect, is that the rise of a wicked person is less tragic than any other change of fortune affecting either a good man or a bad. But this contention is never proved; in fact Aristotle's own words prove to us that he holds the fall of a holy man to be in all respects as untragic as the rise of a bad man. For what he observes about the fall of a holy man — that it cannot move the people to pity and fear or afford them pleasure, that it is in fact so abominable in their sight that it moves them to indignation against God — he repeats when speaking of the rise of a wicked man. In his opinion, then, both changes of fortune are equally

abominable. This conclusion we find unacceptable, for, as we have already explained, the people, who believe that all things happen by the just disposition of God, being each and all under His special providence, may, to be sure, abominate the immediate causes of a holy man's fall and yet believe that God has permitted it for His own glory and the holy man's benefit. The same abomination for the immediate causes and the same justification of God's ways prevails among them when they witness the rise of a bad man from misery to happiness, for then they may believe that God has bestowed happiness upon him to reward him here below for the few good deeds he has done in the course of a bad life, or they may think that He has exalted him to the heights so that the fall thence may be all the greater, or may imagine that He has appointed him judge and hangman to chastise His elect, who by frequently neglecting their duties in periods of tranquillity had failed to hold God's commandments in due honor. In short they will believe anything of God except this, that He has shown favor to a wicked man for some evil end and that He is or can be the author of evil.

It is to be borne in mind, then, that just as we are moved to pity and fear by the fall of a just man because seeing misfortune overtake one who is like ourselves or better and therefore deserves it less than we we realize that misfortune may one day overtake us, so we are similarly moved by the rise of a bad man from misery to happiness, for the spectacle brings to mind the possibility that we may one day suffer the same pains that he inflicted upon his innocent contemporaries, the possibility, that is, of another baseborn villain rising to the lordship of our city and cruelly subjecting us, though innocent of wrongdoing, to oppression and persecution. Thus if we consider the persons who should or may be considered, we may conclude that the rise of a bad man is no less capable of moving to pity and fear than the fall of a just man.

* * * * *

[1.365] Aristotle holds (13. 52b 36–53a 1) that the rise of a thoroughly wicked person from misery to happiness is "of all situations the most remote from tragedy, for it has none of the qualities that it should [have], being unpleasing to men and neither piteous nor fear-inspiring."³ Now tragic plots embody three distinct types of incidents. The pleasure they produce is also of three kinds, and once we have duly examined them we shall see how little Aristotle understands the nature of tragic pleasure. Plots of the first type represent the rise of a just person from misery to happiness or the fall of a wicked one from happiness to misery. Plots of this type afford the same kind of pleasure to all virtuous men, for the virtuous feel as much pleasure to see the good exalted as to see the wicked abased. This pleasure proceeds directly from the exaltation of the just or the abasement of the wicked. The second type represents the fall of a just man or the rise of a wicked one. The pleasure derived from plots of this second type is quite different in kind from that derived from those of the first. For whereas in the first the pleasure proceeded directly from the rise of some just man or the fall of a wicked one, in the second it is produced

indirectly, the reason being that the virtuous are saddened as much by the good fortune of the wicked as by the bad fortune of the just, so that the direct effect of both these reversals upon them is one of sadness. The pleasure derived from tragedies of the second type, then, is the result of sadness. The phenomenon is to be explained in this manner. A person who is saddened by a spectacle which is rightly a cause for sadness recognizes himself to be to that extent a just man, and the discovery is cause for joy. The process is a natural one, undergone even by those incapable of explaining it, for not everyone knows or understands why he rejoices at being saddened by the fall of a good man and the rise of a villain. The third type represents a just man on the brink of misery, from which he is saved by a recognition or other device, or a wicked man on the point of attaining happiness, which is snatched from him in the same manner. In this instance the pleasure is and is not different from the two kinds of pleasure peculiar to the first two. It differs from them in that it is a combination of direct and indirect pleasure; it is like them in that it derives from situations from which they also spring. It differs from them if we regard it as a compound; it is like them if we separate the two kinds of pleasure of which it is composed. As one witnesses a tragedy of this type one rejoices to discover oneself to be a just person, for one is saddened by the spectacle of a just man on the brink of misery or of an unjust one on the threshold of happiness. This pleasure is indirect. Then again one takes pleasure in seeing the just man rescued from impending evil or the unjust one robbed of the happiness he has almost attained. This pleasure is direct.

* * * * *

[I.366] Aristotle continues by asserting (13. 53a 1-7) that the representation of the fall of a thoroughly wicked man "may afford some pleasure to men⁴ but [will be] neither piteous nor fear-inspiring, for pity is aroused when a person suffers unjustly and fear when he is like [us]." Greater pleasure and consolation proceed from the fall of a wicked man from happiness to misery or the rise of a holy one from misery to happiness than from any other reversal experienced by a holy or a wicked person. Here the pleasure and consolation are direct, not indirect, proceeding, as they do, directly from the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the holy. Such punishments and rewards cannot move to pity and fear for the reasons already adduced by Aristotle. But whether the two reversals in question and the third, in which a bad man is represented as rising from misery to happiness, which according to Aristotle are untragic and not to be admitted in a tragedy because incapable of arousing pity and fear—whether these reversals are to be eschewed in composing a plot I am far from certain and should like to see the prohibition supported by some proof stronger than the authority of Aristotle, who seems to say again and again that they have no proper place in tragedy without offering a proof of any value....

* * * * *

[1.418] From the remarks on character found elsewhere in the *Poetics* a number of conclusions are to be drawn. (1) Character⁵ is a qualitative part of tragedy, and being a different thing from the other parts it is, as it were, a species of tragedy.... (2) Since it is a part, though not the principal part, of tragedy, character is less important than that principal part, which is the plot, and is dependent upon it. It is dependent upon the plot or the action in the following manner. There can be no action without agents. These agents are not without moral traits, and these traits are manifested above all by their actions. The moral traits which constitute a person's character, then, become part and parcel of a tragedy thanks to the agents in so far as they act and are subordinate to and dependent upon the plot. For this reason character is ranked second among the parts of tragedy. (3) Being subordinate to the plot, upon which it depends and which it subserves, character bears to the plot the relation of a means to an end and not of the end to which the plot is the means. (4) Since it is the agents who are designed to suit the plot and not the plot the agents, the poet must master the doctrines necessary for the proper portrayal of character before those which teach the proper construction of the plot. (5) Since the types of agents introduced are determined by the plot, their moral traits are the cause of the action. (6) Since the types of agents introduced are determined by the plot and their moral traits are the cause of the action, these persons must be of a kind to render the action in the highest degree piteous, fear-inspiring, and possible. To achieve this end tragic personages must be (15. 54a 16–28) good, appropriate, like us, and self-consistent; their moral traits must also be recognizable as grounded in verisimilitudes or necessity.

Though character is subordinate to the plot and dependent upon it, yet it is so important a thing that we call one of the four species of tragedy and epic poetry "tragedy of character" and "epic of character," just as we go to the plot for the names of the remaining three species and call them "simple," "complex" and "tragedy of suffering" and "epic of suffering" (18. 55b 34–56a; 24. 59b 9). None of the four remaining qualitative parts of tragedy is important enough to have supplied a name to any species of tragedy or epic poetry. Next, there are two kinds of literary productions of a nature not to admit the manifestation of the speaker's predilections and aversions as a secondary function. They are those for which, as Aristotle assumes, the manifestation in question is not a secondary but a primary function and those from which it should be excluded as unnecessary and undesirable, as are discourses on the arts and sciences and poetic and historical narratives in which the author speaks in his own person. For if the narrative poet or the historian manifests his predilections and aversions through his narrative he thereby betrays his emotional bias and as a result will forfeit the very thing he must strive with all his powers to retain, which is the reader's confidence in his veracity. A second result will be to lay himself open to the charge of presumption, for the reader will find reason to suspect that the author holds him less competent than himself to form his own judgments on what he reads and to decide which things are to be accepted and which rejected. No one understood this better than Homer,

who seldom allows himself to pass judgment on the subjects of his narrative, a compliment that cannot be paid to Virgil, who lets his preferences be known more frequently than Homer. On the other hand when characters whose interests are bound up with the affairs which form the subject of the narrative are made to speak and consequently are represented as swayed by feeling, their words must be made to perform the secondary function of revealing their predilections and aversions. Hence, as Aristotle attests, speakers in Homer never fail to manifest these emotions and consequently to show certain personal characteristics, a feature of his poetry that has won him the commendation that must be denied to certain modern tragedians whose works are lacking in sharply delineated characters even though in a tragedy the manifestation of an agent's desires and aversions should be a secondary function of his utterances, which are occasioned by matters in which he is personally concerned. And I fail to see how a tragedy can merit praise if its agents show no definite moral traits. On the other hand a painting in which a figure is not recognizable as this or that kind of person may be pronounced good of its kind if its subject is portrayed in some action or state in which the manifestation of character is not called for; yet even so, as we have already said, the painter who successfully portrays his subjects in actions in which they must reveal their characters is to be praised more than those who do not because he has succeeded in overcoming the difficulties inherent in the portrayal of character. Finally we are to note that in those parts of a poem in which the speeches are made to perform the secondary function of manifesting the speaker's desires and aversions the language does not require much embellishment, and the reason may be that when a person is being swayed by passion his style is a natural and not an artificial or rhetorical one, a style that reflects the moral state that is at the moment predominant in the speaker.

This exhausts Aristotle's observations on character. I have gathered them in these pages without extended comment, having already offered some of my own thoughts on the subjects and being about to offer more....

* * * * *

[1.420] Let us stand firm against every suggestion that by saying that in creating his characters the poet must aim at goodness, appropriateness, ordinary virtue, and self-consistency (15. 54a 16-28) Aristotle would have these requirements met by all personages, the minor no less than the major, that are or can be introduced into a tragedy. This is the interpretation adopted by certain commentators, with the result that they have found themselves entangled in grave error and powerless to draw a rational meaning from Aristotle's words.⁶ The persons Aristotle has in mind are those he has discussed thus far, namely those he would have the poet choose as capable of arousing the greatest pity and fear and whom we have called tragic personages. Nor is he here saying anything new. He is merely showing how he would have us understand what he has already said, clarifying a point already made rather than advancing a new doctrine. He had said that the tragic person best adapted to

arouse pity and fear must be, for the reasons given, a person of ordinary virtue and consequently the moral traits with which the poet endows him must be those of a rather good man. To determine which moral traits are suited to a tragic person, the poet must keep four requirements in mind: goodness, appropriateness, ordinary virtue, and self-consistency.

To attain this end he must proceed in the following fashion. The moral traits which first present themselves in his mind are good and bad, and they appear not in two distinct groups but as a confused aggregate. Being in need only of the good, the poet separates the good from the bad and retains only the good for his use. Next, the good traits, which are of more than one kind and owe their being, as we shall see, to nature, accident, or personal effort,⁷ present themselves, like the earlier ones, as a confused aggregate; and since he needs one kind more than another for the person whom he has chosen to represent, he must skilfully separate each kind from the rest, retaining only the kind appropriate to that person. Then since the traits appropriate to the person to be imitated may present themselves in his mind as a confused aggregate, the appropriate good traits being superlatively or moderately or only slightly good, he will separate the moderately good, the only ones he needs, from the rest and put them to his use. Finally, since moderately good traits, some of which are consistently and others inconsistently of their kind, can also present themselves as a confused aggregate, the poet, who sometimes needs the consistent among them and sometimes the inconsistent, must separate the one kind from the other so as not to use the consistent when the inconsistent are in order and vice versa. It is clear, then, that in representing a tragic character the poet must aim at four things: goodness, appropriateness, ordinary virtue, and self-consistency.

Goodness is the opposite of wickedness. Regarded in its relation to wickedness it may be called goodness pure and simple because it is the same goodness found in every kind of person and is not less than goodness in different persons of the same kind and does not vary from what it is essentially at different times in the same person. Appropriateness, ordinary virtue, and consistency are all species of goodness, but the goodness of which they are manifestations is relative. Appropriateness is goodness relative to goodness of other kinds, which if made to replace the appropriate goodness would cease to be good and would become evil. The goodness of a moderately good person is goodness relative to that of other persons of the same kind, which if transferred to the first person would become an evil. And consistency is goodness relative to inconsistency in the same person. Inconsistency is therefore evil because it destroys moral consistency, which is a requisite of moral goodness. We have, then, a simple goodness and three kinds of relative goodness, of which three one (appropriateness) is proper to one type of person and is different from the goodness of persons of other types, another (ordinary virtue) is proper to persons of one kind but quantitatively different from the goodness of other persons of the same kind, and the third (consistency) is proper to a person but temporally different from the goodness of the same person.

Let us set aside simple goodness and speak of the three types of relative

goodness. To understand what Aristotle has to say about appropriateness we must divide the determinants of character into three classes: the natural, the accidental, and the acquired.⁸ I call "natural" such determinants of character as sex and age; "accidental" such as stem from a person's status as rich man or poor man, king or subject, master or servant; "acquired" such as have developed in a person who has attained a mastery of the art of painting or of oratory, philosophy, astronomy, etc. These distinctions are Aristotle's own. He speaks of the natural determinants of character when he says that moral traits appropriate to a man are not appropriate to a woman; of the accidental when he says that moral traits appropriate to a free man are not appropriate to a slave; and of the acquired when he says that the moral traits laudable in the philosopher are not so in the ignorant. As an example of the last form of inappropriateness Aristotle cites Melanippe's expertly reasoned discourse.

It is by now clear that characters formed by any of the three classes of determinants—the natural, the accidental, and the acquired—must be different from one another. The philosopher, whose character has been formed by the practice of philosophy, must be different from the unlearned person, who owes his character to nature. The unlearned Melanippe, as we have seen, must not be represented as discoursing like a philosopher. But individual characters formed by each of the three classes of determinants must also be differentiated from one another. Thus the characters of master and servant, king and subject are all formed by the determinants we have called accidental; yet the characteristic bearing of master to servant and of servant to master should not be of the same pattern as that of king to subject and of subject to king. This principle holds not only for characters that are directly formed by any one of the three classes of determinants, but also for those formed by the determinants to be grouped under any of the genera into which each class may be divided. Thus "political" describes a genus of determinants under "accidental." King and subject are equally characters formed by the genus of determinants here called "political." But king and subject must each be given a character that is different from the other's.

Aristotle rebukes (15. 54a 30–31) for his offense against appropriateness an unknown poet whose Ulysses was so overcome by fear as he steered his course between Scylla and Charybdis that he lamented his fate in a manner unbecoming a brave man. He might likewise have rebuked Homer, who also represents him as uttering sentiments unworthy of him (*Od.* 5. 297ff.) during the tempest that overtook him off the island of Corfu. Virgil, following in Homer's footsteps (*Aen.* 1. 92ff.) rather than seeking the right way, is guilty of the same offense, for Aeneas' words and actions during the tempest that overtook his fleet off the coast of Carthage are as unbecoming a brave man as are Ulysses'. Aristotle also levels the charge of inappropriateness against Euripides, who represents Melanippe, a young girl unschooled in philosophy, as seeking to convince her father with ingenious arguments from the most profound and most abstruse philosophy that the twins she had conceived and borne secretly had really been borne by a cow.⁹ Boccaccio (*Dec.* 4. 1) too is guilty of this same offense and hardly less than the above poets; for he represents Ghismonda, an unlettered

girl whom her father surprised sporting with an unsuitable lover of low condition, as defending her misconduct with the boldness of a great hero at the conclusion of some glorious enterprise and with arguments of such subtlety that they could only with difficulty be invented by the profoundest of philosophers and the most brilliant of orators. Ariosto too observed the inappropriateness and was wont to criticize Boccaccio for it.¹⁰

The writer, then, is bound not to stray from appropriateness in the portrayal of his characters. On the other hand he may stray from it when constrained to do so by history. He may, for instance, represent Penthesilea or some other Amazon as fierce and cruel in arms and in battle because history tells that all Amazons were fierce warriors. He may also stray from it when free from that constraint, though not without first informing the reader that the person to whom he is about to assign moral qualities not normally met in one of his or her kind differs from others of that kind for some special reason. That is done by Virgil (*Aen.* 7. 803ff.), who, about to portray Camilla as the intrepid captain of a troop of cavalry, characterizes her as a virgin warrior whose woman's hands are unused to spinning wool. But it is not done, and to his great blame, by Boccaccio in the story (*Dec.* 7. 5) in which he represents a priest conducting himself in a manner unbecoming a man in holy orders. It is the story in which a woman's confession is heard by her jealous husband. In that story a chaplain permits the husband to don a priestly habit and in that disguise to hear his wife's confession, and he not only permits this but becomes the husband's accomplice, telling the wife on the morning in which she was to receive holy communion that he was unable to hear her confession himself and would send her one of his brethren. But what chaplain would have been so depraved, so ungodly, and so careless of earthly consequences as to have allowed himself in so short a time not only to consent to such impious trickery but to be a party to it? Clearly, Boccaccio should not have embarked upon his story without first informing the reader and showing at some length that his chaplain was so prone to wrongdoing that he would in all probability have been capable of doing the things he did and worse.

This would be the place for a discussion of characters of ordinary virtue. But we have already discussed that subject at sufficient length and so proceed to a discussion of consistency. Consistency may be of three kinds: remote, proximate, and internal.¹¹ A poet may be said to give a character remote consistency when he portrays him as he has been portrayed by earlier poets. Horace (*Ars Poet.* 120-22) recommends this kind of consistency when he describes the character to be given to Achilles:

If you bring the glorious Achilles back upon the stage
Let him be dynamic, irascible, relentless,
Let him deny that laws were made for him, ever appealing to
the sword.

This is the character given to him by the earlier poets. A character possesses proximate consistency when he is portrayed in one work as he is portrayed

in another by the same poet. Homer's Ulysses, for instance, is by and large the same character both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*. Internal consistency is the consistency of a character with himself throughout the same work. No poet may offend against consistency of any of these three kinds; yet though all offenses against consistency are grave, the gravest are those against the third kind, while those against the second kind are less grave and those against the first the least so. Each of these offenses grows more grave when combined with one of the others in the same work, as Euripides offends both against remote and proximate consistency in his *Orestes*, where Menelaus appears as a base villain though he had been portrayed as a man of ordinary virtue both by other poets and by Euripides himself in other poems.¹² We find an offense against internal consistency in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, where Iphigenia is portrayed as timorous and afraid of death in the early part of the action and bold and unafraid in the later part. Her inconsistency was not recognized as a fault by a certain George Buchanan, a Scottish poet who adopted Euripides' tragedy as a model for his own *Jephtha*. Dante offends against proximate consistency by representing Count Guido da Montefeltro as an admirable person in the *Convivio* (4. 28) and as a great sinner in the *Inferno* (27). He also offends against internal consistency by saying in the *Inferno* (34. 64ff.) that Brutus, as a follower of the Stoic sect, endures his torments in silence, though they were the most agonizing in Hell, and in the *Paradiso* (6. 73ff.) that they cause him to bark and howl like a dog.

* * * * *

[1.427] Having said that tragic characters must meet four requirements, Aristotle now asserts (15. 54a 16-17) that "one [of them], and the first, is that they be good." The reason for this is not, as some commentators would have it, that if they were wicked they would be a scandal to the audience, who would look up to them as exemplars for the conduct of their own lives;¹³ for if they were wicked and were represented as falling from happiness into misery, who could be scandalized by them? Who could look up to them as models to be emulated? The fact is that anyone witnessing their fall would only profit by what he saw and be confirmed in the pursuit of virtue. And how can all characters in a tragedy be good? How can a tragedy dispense with at least one wicked person? Aristotle's reason, then, for requiring that tragic characters be good is that when they fall from happiness into misery they arouse our pity and fear. A tragedy needs no more than one good character to arouse our pity and fear, and it is of this one character and not of the rest that Aristotle speaks in this passage. That he is here speaking only of the person who is to arouse the tragic emotions is clearly shown by the fact that he would have tragic characters not simply good but only moderately good, saying that in this respect they should resemble the common people. The reason for this we have already given. Being good and like us, i.e., not pre-eminently good, are two qualities proper to the tragic person in the sense that he is never without them, whereas they are not always found, and indeed need not be

found, in persons other than the tragic. To these qualities Aristotle has added the two others of appropriateness and consistency, which are proper also to the untragic person and are no less necessary to the tragic person than to the untragic, being as indispensable to the one as to the other....

* * * * *

[I.429] One would imagine that since he had undertaken to offer examples of failures to meet the four requirements proper to tragic characters Aristotle would have begun with the first and have proceeded in order to the remaining three. But his first concern (15. 54a 28–29) is “the depravity of the Menelaus in *Orestes*,” and he ignores the first requirement, or at least offers no example of an offense against it, as well as the third. The proper procedure would have been to observe first that the poet fails to meet the first requirement of tragic character when he represents a depraved person as falling into some notable misfortune, since the misfortunes of such persons fail to move us either to pity or to fear. Examples of such characters would be Capaneus and Salmoneus (Hyginus, *Fab.* 61), both of whom were struck down by Jupiter’s thunderbolt. It is true that Aristotle censures Euripides for having portrayed Menelaus as a bad man. But the reason for that is not, as it would have been if he had had in mind Euripides’ failure to meet the first requirement, that a character of that type fails to move us to pity and fear, but—and this is the only reason for which he can be censured—that Euripides has done violence first to proximate and remote consistency, for Menelaus had always been portrayed as a good man by Euripides himself as well as by other poets, and secondly to verisimilitude, for it is not probable that an uncle would be so depraved as to pursue to the death a nephew who had avenged the unjust murder of his father, who was also the uncle’s brother. That Menelaus’ depravity does not reduce the power of *Orestes* to arouse pity and fear becomes plain if we consider that in that tragedy Menelaus either is not a tragic character or, if he is, i.e., if he suffers, he does so because he is depraved, for he would be spared suffering if he had been represented as good.

To make my point clear I will give a synopsis of the story. Orestes and Pylades, who have slain Clytaemnestra, are pursued by her father, Tyndareus, who desires to avenge his daughter’s death. In this pursuit he is joined by Menelaus, who thus shows a greater love for his father-in-law than for his nephew. To secure Menelaus’ withdrawal, Pylades and Orestes abduct Helen and Hermione and threaten to slay them. The tragic persons in this story, then, are Orestes and Pylades, both persons of ordinary virtue who as a result of avenging Agamemnon’s death fall from happiness into the misery of living constantly in the fear of death. If someone should say that Menelaus is also tragic because the threats of death to his wife and daughter plunged him from happiness into misery, we would reply that he brought misery upon himself by being less good than he once had been and doing what he never should have consented to do. The fact is, however, that the plot could not have been developed and could not have been furnished with incidents of the appropriate

kind if Menelaus had not been portrayed as wicked. For if he had been portrayed as the good man he had always been, Tyndareus could not have secured his help; without his help he could never have reduced his daughter's murderers to the state where they would of necessity be in peril of their lives; and if Orestes and Pylades had not been reduced to that state neither they nor any of the other characters would have been tragic. I therefore fail to understand how Aristotle can say that there was no need to portray Menelaus as a wicked person.¹⁴ (We shall perhaps return to the consideration of this matter.) Aristotle should next have given an example of the failure to meet the requirement of tragic goodness in a person of more than ordinary virtue whose fall would be taken as proof that God does not extend His providence to things here below or hold them in His care. In Aristotle's view a tragedy would have this effect if its subject were the death of Socrates or of John the Baptist.

* * * * *

[I.43f] Aristotle now (15. 54a 33-36) says, "Both in the portrayal of character and in the construction of the plot what is to be sought is either the necessary or the probable." These words are either superfluous or simply an amplification of his remarks on appropriateness and consistency. For to seek necessity or verisimilitude in the portrayal of character is in my opinion neither more nor less than to seek appropriateness and consistency. These subjects either have been or have not been fully discussed. If they have been, the present discussion is superfluous. If they have not, Aristotle is here completing his discussion of them by adding that in seeking to make characters appropriate and consistent we should aim sometimes at necessity and sometimes at verisimilitude. A mother who knowingly brings herself to slay her innocent child must necessarily have undergone great spiritual turmoil; therefore a poet should not represent Medea as slaying her children except after a long period of mental conflict. It is not probable that a habitually timorous person will as a matter of course turn into a courageous one in a short time without the operation of some powerful cause; therefore it is not probable that Iphigenia, who early in the play recoiled in great fear from death, should in a few hours and for no compelling reason change her nature, becoming one who no longer shuns death and in fact holds it in contempt. It is probable that Tyndareus, a person of ordinary virtue, should be goaded by grief for his murdered daughter into conceiving hostile designs against Orestes and seeking some way of dispatching him from this world; but it is neither probable nor necessary that the murder of his sister-in-law, whose depravities should have made her the object of his mortal hate, should so fill Menelaus, a man of ordinary virtue, with rage against his nephew that he would join in the pursuit of him and in the search for ways of compassing his death. And perhaps what Aristotle's words really intend to convey is that it was neither necessary nor yet probable that Orestes' murder of Clytaemnestra would have effected so complete a transformation in Menelaus' character and have constrained him to display such great iniquity.

* * * * *

[1.444] Aristotle here (15. 54b 8-15) returns to his discussion of character, telling us that if we would excel in the portrayal of character we must follow the example of good portrait painters and form an idea of human perfection like the idea of perfect beauty on which they model their portraits of beautiful men and women.... Aristotle's argument is this: just as portrait painters paint beautiful subjects successfully because they steadily contemplate a model of perfect beauty which they have previously formed in their minds, so the tragic poet, whose object is to portray men who are better than the average, must depict his characters with constant reference to his idea of a perfect character.¹⁵

I suspect, however, that Aristotle's advice remains only slightly useful or quite useless unless he also teaches us what this model of a perfect character is and how we are to form it. If I am told that the matter was adequately treated in his discussion of character, I can only ask why he chooses to repeat himself and does not simply refer us to that discussion. The fact is that he does not believe that what he has so far taught us about character provides us with all the constituents of a perfect model, for he has taught us that tragic characters are to be not perfectly but only moderately virtuous, so that either his teaching thus far has been bad or his present teaching is not good. But even granting that the two doctrines are not inconsistent and that tragedy requires perfectly virtuous characters, the fact remains that the tragic poet cannot model all his tragic personages on one perfect character as the painter can model all his representations of, say, beautiful women on one perfectly beautiful woman, for there are more varieties of characters, whatever their degree of perfection, than there are of womanly beauty. That beauty consists simply of features, dimensions, and harmonized colors; and Perino del Vaga, a Florentine painter of very great repute in our time, could model many of his female figures, and especially those of the Virgin, on his wife, whom he had constituted in his mind as the model of perfect beauty, so that one can recognize in each of them a variant of the supreme beauty. On the other hand when Giotto, another Florentine painter of great repute in times past, represented in the portico of St. Peter's in Rome the storm-tossed disciples on the Jordan gazing on Christ as he walked toward them on the waves, he neither could nor would depict all of them as overcome by the same kind of awe but assigned his own peculiar kind to each, and no beholder can judge whose expression is to be most admired.¹⁶ That human character is of many varieties and is not reducible to a single perfect type may be verified in Timanthes' painting of the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis, which won the commendation of Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 36. 73-74), Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 2. 13. 13), and others....

* * * * *

[1.446] We must bear in mind that, as we have already observed, the virtue represented by the painter is a different thing from that represented by the poet; for the painter represents the virtue of the body, which is beauty, and

the poet the virtue of the soul, which is good character. It must also be borne in mind that, as we have pointed out, the perfection of painting does not consist in the representation of a perfectly beautiful person any more than it does in that of a perfectly ugly one or of one of ordinary beauty. It consists rather in a picture that is life-like, natural, and resembling its subject, be he very beautiful, very ugly, or only beautiful in the ordinary way, though the painter must know the dimensions, proportions, and colors to be used in depicting a beautiful person.

* * * * *

[I.446] I do not believe that good painters keep either at home¹⁶ or in their minds the model¹⁷ of which Aristotle speaks in this passage (15. 54b 10) and that they contemplate it when they paint some known or unknown person. If they did, their figures would be all alike, and critics would condemn them as they condemned Perino del Vaga because all his female figures bore the likeness of his wife. Nor, as far as I know, do we read of painters who have followed the practice which Aristotle recommends. It is of course true that it is easier to produce the likeness of a statue or a portrait than of a living model, and for that reason pupils in painters' shops are taught the art by being made to reproduce paintings and to make paintings of statues. The great advantage of these over living models is that they remain always in the same position, and we are free to contemplate them or any part of them as long as we choose without discomfort to them. Otherwise I cannot see what useful purpose the "model in the house" can serve....

15

Circumstances that Render Incidents More or Less Piteous and Fear-Inspiring

[I.393] In his search for the plot most capable of arousing pity and fear and consequently most apt to produce a tragedy of the highest order Aristotle has hitherto held five requirements in mind: (1) The tragic agent must be neither eminently good nor eminently wicked; (2) he must be represented as passing from happiness to misery; (3) his fall must be due to some error and not to wrongdoing; (4) he must be a person of noble rank and not of humble birth; (5) the plot must have a single and not a double issue. But the plot can be made still more piteous and fear-inspiring by other circumstances and especially the following three: (1) It may represent the deed of horror done between friends, the term being understood to designate not only friends but kinsmen;

(2) it may represent it as done in ignorance of the relationship between the two; (3) it may represent it as only on the point of being done. For this reason Aristotle has seen fit to discuss these three circumstances also (14. 53b 14–25) and to enlarge the number of requisites of the good plot.

Let us discuss, he says, three other circumstances by which incidents are made more piteous and fear-inspiring. He speaks first of the relationship between those involved in a deed of horror and recommends that they should be friends rather than enemies or strangers, for the injuries done by one person to another are necessarily done by a friend, an enemy, or someone who is neither a friend nor an enemy. In recommending that they be friends he denies the desirability of their being enemies or strangers by simply affirming that our pity and fear do not possess the requisite intensity when they are caused by a person slaying or about to slay an enemy or one who is neither friend nor enemy. This recommendation he makes on his own authority and without any attempt to justify it, simply saying that the situation which we must give the preference to is one in which a brother slays or is about to slay his brother, a son slays or is about to slay his father, a mother slays or is about to slay her son, or any of them commits or is about to commit some other deed of horror of this kind.

Let us see, however, if we cannot offer arguments to prove that these situations are truly the best.... We begin by showing that they are the most capable of arousing fear. An injury and its power to arouse our fear can be magnified as a result of the person who inflicts it and the frequency of the opportunities open to him for doing so. The injury is greatest when committed by a friend because from a friend we expect benefits rather than injuries, whereas we expect injuries rather than benefits from an enemy and neither from a stranger. Hence when we are injured by a friend we not only receive an injury, but lose the benefits we expect and hope for, whereas when we are injured by an enemy or by a stranger our hopes for good are not defeated, for we expect only evil from our enemies and expect no good from a stranger. Therefore an injury from a friend, unlike one from an enemy or a stranger, is a double injury. Then, too, a person's friend has more opportunities for injuring him than does his enemy or a stranger, and for two reasons: because friends are frequently in one another's company and because one is never on one's guard against a friend, as he always is against an enemy and to a lesser extent against strangers. Therefore injuries done by one friend to another are the most fear-inspiring of all.

Such injuries are also the most piteous, for an injury that is magnified by reason of the person who inflicts it is also more piteous. We have proved that an injury inflicted by a friend is for that very reason greater than one inflicted by an enemy or a stranger, and from that it follows that it is also more piteous. We now assert that an injury is the more piteous the more it constitutes an offense against justice; therefore an injury inflicted by a friend is more piteous than another because a friend has less cause for inflicting it than an enemy or a stranger. Finally an injury is more piteous when inflicted by a person acting against his will, for in that case it is more deeply felt by the injured par-

ty. I say it is more deeply felt because knowing that the injury is not deliberate the injured person cannot avenge himself and cannot in justice complain of it, and such complaints are a species of revenge, and revenge a way of securing satisfaction for injuries received. Now it is clear that when a friend injures a friend he does so against his will; if not he is at least constrained to do so by very strong considerations, which is almost to say that he acts against his will. But when an enemy injures an enemy he does so quite willingly, and when the offender is a stranger he has not had to overcome strong disinclinations. Therefore an injury inflicted by a friend is not only more fear-inspiring but also more piteous than one inflicted by an enemy or a stranger.

For these reasons, then, the plots which should be preferred as most apt to rouse pity and fear are those in which friend injures friend. But since not all deeds of horror are equally affecting when the persons involved are friends—nor does Aristotle say that they are—and since when those involved are enemies or strangers the deed of horror is sometimes piteous and fear-inspiring, it will be well for us to classify and rank all persons, whether friends, enemies, or strangers, who have not been rejected by tragedy, nor judged by poets to be incapable of arousing pity and fear. We shall then know what types of persons are more or less desirable for any tragedies we may undertake to compose and shall be in better position to pass judgment on those of others. The persons suited to be agents in a tragic plot are the following, in the order of their effectiveness: (1) those whose blood-ties are so close that any carnal intercourse among them is condemned by the law as incestuous and that the murder of any one of them by any other is punished under the law of parricide (this is the only one mentioned by Aristotle); (2) men in holy orders and our superiors or our masters; (3) persons who are not so closely related in blood as those of the first classes or who are only friends or companions; (4) those who are so virtuous in both word and deed that they might almost be called the friends of those whom they benefit by their example, such as Curtius (Livy 7. 6), Joseph (Gen. 50:15 ff.), and Socrates; (5) those who are neither friends nor enemies, as Lycus and Megara in *Hercules Furens*; (6) enemies who have never inflicted and can never inflict an injury on us, being incapable of violence by reason of age, sex, or other like impediment, as were Polyxena and Astyanax; (7) enemies who seem to be too severely punished by their own enemies, as Aeschylus' Prometheus seems to be.

Of these seven classes of persons Aristotle approves, as we have said, only the first not because the rest are incapable of arousing pity and fear, but because the persons in the first class are better fitted to do this than any others. But since these persons differ from one another and some of them are better adapted to arouse pity and fear than the rest, let us subdivide this first class into three, arranging the subdivisions in the order of their effectiveness. The first type comprises those who die by their own hand. The second comprises the children who slay their fathers and mothers and fathers and mothers who slay their children. Of this type also are the grandchildren who slay their grandparents and the grandparents who slay their grandchildren. Among them belong not only those who have actually committed a murder, but also those who have

been on the point of committing one or some other deed of horror. The third type comprises husbands who slay their wives, wives who slay their husbands, brothers who slay their brothers, uncles who slay their nephews, and nephews who slay their uncles.

If we consider the matter with care we shall find that persons of the first type are more capable of arousing pity and fear than those of the second and third, and those of the second more than those of the third. The reasons for this are the following. An action is the more piteous the less common it is by reason of the person or persons involved. Moreover an action is the more piteous the less lawful it is by reason of the person or persons involved. It is less common for a person to slay himself than for a father to slay his son, a son his father, or a brother his brother; and it is less common for a father to slay his son or a son his father than for a brother to slay his brother. Further, it is less lawful that a person should slay himself than that a father should slay his son, a son his father, or a brother his brother; and it is less lawful that a father should slay his son or a son his father than that a brother should slay his brother. Therefore persons of the first type are more capable of arousing pity than are those of the second and third types, and those of the second more than those of the third.

These persons are to be ranked in the same order when we consider their power to inspire fear, and for the following reasons. The more horrible and abominable the action the more fear-inspiring it is by reason of the persons involved. Moreover a person can render an action more fear-inspiring if he is in position to accomplish it with greater ease than is another. But it is more horrible and abominable that one should take his own life than that a father should slay his son, a son his father, or a brother his brother; and it is more horrible and abominable that a father should defile his hands with his son's blood or a son with his father's than that a brother should defile his with a brother's. Moreover it is easier for one to take his own life than it is for him to slay a kinsman, for he has more opportunities for doing so; and for the same reason it is easier and therefore more fear-inspiring for a father to slay his son or a son his father than for a brother to slay his brother. Persons of the first type, then, render a plot not only more piteous but more fear-inspiring than do those of the second and third types, and those of the second type are more effective as tragic agents than those of the third....

* * * * *

[1.403] By saying that a poet should rehandle the plots received from the older poets "skilfully"¹ and in a manner to win commendation (14. 53b 24-54a 15) Aristotle no doubt means that since the poet's aim is to compose tragedies of a high order that are capable of moving an audience to pity and fear, he should prefer plots in which an agent commits or is about to commit a deed of horror unintentionally and in ignorance of his relationship to the possible victim to plots in which the deed of horror is committed or is about to be committed intentionally and in full knowledge of that relationship. We shall be

better able to grasp Aristotle's meaning if we observe that tragic plots are of four kinds. (1) Those in which a person is about to commit, but does not actually carry out, a deed of horror unintentionally and in ignorance of his relationship to the possible victim. Of this kind is the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides, where Iphigenia, though not intent on committing fratricide, comes very near to slaying Orestes, whom she does not know to be her brother. (2) Those in which a person, again unintentionally and unknowingly, actually commits a deed of horror. Of this kind is the story of Oedipus and Jocasta, whose unintended incest brought ruin upon both. (3) Those in which a person commits a deed of horror intentionally and knowing his relationship to his victim. An example of these is the *Medea* of Euripides, where Medea slays her children intentionally and fully conscious of their identity. (4) Those in which a person is intentionally and knowingly about to commit a deed of horror and then fails to carry it out, as Haemon fails to carry out his intention of killing the man whom he knows to be his father.²

Aristotle considers the first of these kinds the most tragic of all, the second more tragic than the third and fourth, and the third more tragic than the fourth. But since he offers no reasons sufficient to demonstrate the soundness of this ranking, it behooves us to examine it and to judge whether or not it is acceptable. Let us begin with plots of the fourth type, which he holds to be the least tragic or, rather, quite untragic. In plots of this type the intended deed of horror is not carried out for a variety of reasons. In the *Antigone* Haemon failed to slay Creon, his father, because Creon fled.³ Mithridanes failed to slay Nathan because he suffered a change of heart (*Dec.* 10. 3). Lycus failed to slay Megara and her children because they received human help, Hercules appearing in time to save them. Abraham (Gen. 22:10-12) desisted from sacrificing Isaac because he received help, for the Lord forbade him to carry out the sacrifice. Tereus (Ovid, *Met.* 6. 667ff.) failed to slay his wife Procne and his sister-in-law Philomela because of a horrible occurrence that released them from his clutches, both of them having been metamorphosed into birds.

Some of these causes operate to make plots either more or less excellent. A plot will achieve excellence if the deed of horror fails to materialize thanks to human intervention originating, in a manner that will be described elsewhere, in incidents within the plot itself or to divine intervention if, as in the never-completed sacrifices of Isaac and Iphigenia, the deed was to have been done in obedience to a divine command. But it will fall short of excellence if the deed of horror is kept from materializing by a change of heart in the agent or by human intervention originating outside the plot or by divine command. Two incidents of this last type are Bacchus restraining Phrixus from carrying out his intention of slaying his stepmother (Hyginus, *Fab.* 2), and the Angel of the Lord frustrating Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to destroy the three Hebrew youths in the fire (Dan. 3:49ff.).

Plots of the third kind, which Aristotle holds to be rather better than those of the fourth, are to be divided into two kinds, (a) those in which a person intentionally and in complete awareness of what he is about commits a deed of horror against himself and (b) those in which a person commits a deed of

horror against another, again intentionally and in full knowledge of his relationship to that other. A person is driven to act against himself for a variety of reasons: from a sense of shame for having committed some slight error (Ajax, son of Telamon, took his own life out of a sense of shame for what he had done in his madness); from a sense of shame for having committed a grave error (Oedipus and Jocasta); from a great longing for his beloved and the feeling that he cannot live after his beloved's death (Pyramus and Thisbe [Ovid, *Met.* 4. 55ff.], Haemon, and Ghismonda in the *Decameron* [4. 1]); from too great a longing for past glories and the feeling that he cannot continue to live in his present state of ignominy (Brutus [Plutarch, *Brutus* 52], Cassius [ibid. *Brutus* 43], Cato of Utica [ibid. *Cato* 70], Cleopatra [ibid. *Antony* 85-86]); from a strong desire to give unquestionable proof of his innocence (Lucretia, Livy 1. 58); and from an ardent desire to be of service and benefit to his country (Curtius [Livy 7. 6] and the Decii [Livy 8. 9; 10. 28]). When a person commits a deed of horror against another, that other is either a friend or an enemy, and whether friend or enemy he is either guilty or innocent. A person, then, may act intentionally and knowingly against a guilty friend (Aeolus so acted against Macareus and Canace, his children,⁴ and Brutus [Dionysius of Halic., *Ant. Rom.* 5. 8] and Torquatus [Livy, 8. 6-7] against their sons); against an innocent friend (Medea slew her children; Philomela and Procne [Ovid, *Met.* 6. 619ff.] slew Itys; Atreus slew his innocent nephews and served their flesh up to their father, Thyestes; Agamemnon sacrificed Iphigenia); against a guilty enemy (Hecuba blinded Polymnestor and Ulysses blinded Polyphemus [Od. 9. 371ff.]); and against an innocent enemy (the Greeks slew Polyxena and Astyanax). Not all these incidents are equally effective as tragic subjects. We have already said enough to enable the reader to determine which are more and which less so.⁵

Plots to which Aristotle assigns second place are also to be distinguished into two kinds, (a) those in which both persons commit a deed of horror unintentionally in ignorance of each other's identity (Oedipus and Jocasta), and (b) those in which one of the persons commits the deed of horror unintentionally and unknowingly and the other intentionally and fully aware of what he is about (Cinyras and Myrrha). Plots of the first kind are widely different from those of the second, for in them the recognition leads each person involved to hate not the other but himself. In *Oedipus the King* Oedipus and Jocasta do not come to hate each other; on the contrary Oedipus puts out his own eyes and Jocasta takes her own life. But in plots of the second kind the recognition leads the person who has sinned blindly and unintentionally to hate the other. When Cinyras comes to recognize Myrrha (Ovid, *Met.* 10. 471ff.) he conceives a great hate for her and pursues her sword in hand. Nor is it to be doubted that plots of the first kind are more praiseworthy than those of the second for any other reason than that already given, namely, that it is more difficult to handle a plot in which both persons act in ignorance than one in which ignorance blinds only one person, especially when that person is deceived by the other.

Finally plots of the first type may be divided into four kinds, varying with

the four kinds of recognition that may precede the deed of horror and prevent it. The recognition may occur either through those who were about to be involved in the deed or through others. If through those about to be involved, it is (a) a recognition of each by the other (double recognition, as in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, where Orestes recognizes Iphigenia and is recognized by her) or (b) a recognition of one by the other (single recognition, the kind we should have had if Cinyras had recognized Myrrha before he committed incest with her). If it occurs through persons not involved in the impending deed, it does so (c) through some human being (as when Merope [Hyginus. *Fab.* 184] is saved from slaying her son) or (d) through some god. The recognition renders one incident more commendable than another as it is less clearly foreseeable and the result of actions directed to different issues. This conclusion may be verified by what has already been said....

* * * * *

[1.410] The cause of pity and fear, which according to Aristotle constitute the proper effect of tragedy, is suffering. Therefore a person about to commit a major deed of horror intentionally who knows the identity of his intended victim and is checked by some unforeseen impediment cannot be made the subject of a tragedy because the deed is not done and there is no suffering. If this reasoning is accepted, we shall be constrained to believe that a situation greatly admired by Aristotle (14. 54a 4-9), in which a person about to commit a deed of horror against some one whose identity is unknown to him desists from it when his identity is discovered (Merope discovers that the youth she is on the point of killing is her son)⁶ cannot be made the subject of a tragedy because it contains no suffering. And if some one should tell me that the first of these two situations is rightly excluded from tragedy because the person involved is clearly depraved, I would reply that a person who intentionally and knowingly carries out a deed of horror (Medea) is also depraved but is not on that account rejected by tragedy. And if I am reminded that the situation I have just described contains not only a depraved person but also suffering, which has the power to arouse pity and fear, and that suffering is not present in a situation in which a person draws back from committing a deed of horror, I reply that pity and fear are caused not only by actual but also by threatened and impending suffering, as can be verified in tragedies [like Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*] where a person about to commit a deed of horror unintentionally against a person whose identity is unknown to him draws back upon discovering the unknown person's identity and that the only difference between this last situation and the one before is that in this the pity and fear are aroused by both the doer and his intended victim, by the one because he is about to do what he would never do if the victim's identity were known to him and by the other because he comes close to being the victim of unmerited suffering at the hands of a friend, whereas in the one [in which Merope and her son are involved] the pity and fear are aroused only by the person who is about to be wrongfully injured by a friend. Aristotle, then, should

have said not that a situation in which there is no actual suffering is not a fit subject for tragedy, but only that it is less fit than the others, for, if we compare it with one in which a person intentionally and knowingly commits a deed of horror, we shall find that it is less tragic because in this the suffering is actual and not a threatened and impending danger, and, if we compare it with one in which a person draws back from a deed of horror which he is unintentionally and unknowingly about to commit [*Iphigenia*] we shall again find it less tragic because the threatened suffering involves only one person whereas in the second it involves two....

* * * * *

[1.393] [Aristotle concludes his discussion of the plot (14. 53b 37-54a 9) by ranking four possible situations in the rising order of their tragic effectiveness]. "The worst is that in which a person who knows his intended victim is on the point of doing him an injury but desists from carrying out his intention, and it is the worst because it originates in human depravity and also lacks what is essential to tragedy, which is suffering. For this reason incidents of this kind are rarely represented. (An example is Haemon's failure to carry out his intention in the *Antigone*.) The second represents a person deliberately perpetrating a deed of horror. The third, and one preferable to both the first and the second, represents a person acting in ignorance of his victim and then making a recognition. What makes an incident of this kind truly tragic is that it does not originate in depravity and that the recognition can be astounding. But the best is the fourth and last, where ... Merope is on the point of killing her son but desists from doing so when she recognizes him. There is a like situation in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, where the persons involved are a brother and a sister...."

* * * * *

[1.412] As we have just seen Aristotle pronounces the situation in which a person commits a deed of horror unknowingly against some one whom he did not intend to injure to be less tragic than one in which a person in the same circumstances recognizes his intended victim in time to draw back. I suspect that Aristotle here contradicts a pronouncement he made above (9. 52a 2-9) that "the finest form of recognition is the one attended by a reversal, as in *Oedipus the King*." We shall perhaps convict him of self-contradiction if we recall his earlier conclusion (13. 53a 13-15) that a reversal from happiness to misery is more tragic than one from misery to happiness, adding that the finest form of recognition is the one attended by a reversal,⁸ as in *Oedipus*, where the recognition and the reversal from happiness to misery occur simultaneously. In *Iphigenia in Tauris* the recognition and reversal are, it is true, simultaneous, but there the reversal is from misery to happiness. It is clear therefore that having already pronounced incidents of the third kind more tragic than those of the fourth, Aristotle through forgetfulness or change of

opinion here ranks those of the fourth kind above those of the third.

But let us see if for the reasons just presented by Aristotle as valid for judging which of the four incidents in question is to be judged superior or inferior to the others the highest rank has reasonably and legitimately been assigned to the fourth incident as the most excellent and worthy to be ranked above the third. A laudable tragic incident must not be the effect of human depravity, and the more laudable incident is less rooted in depravity than the less laudable. What is more, a laudable incident must be the cause of suffering, and the more laudable incident is the cause of more suffering than the less laudable. Now the third and fourth incidents do not originate in human depravity, nor is either the effect of depravity to a greater or lesser degree than the other. For depravity consists not in doing an evil but in doing it deliberately; and there being no more deliberateness of intention in the third incident than in the fourth, even though an evil deed is actually done in the third but not in the fourth, it follows that though in the absence of depravity these two incidents are equally untragic, they are not seen to be so when we consider the suffering that results from each, for, as we have pointed out, the suffering in the third is actual and all-pervasive whereas in the fourth it is slight and only threatened. Our conclusion is that the fourth incident has been unreasonably judged to be better suited to tragedy than the third.⁹

16

Thought

[I.172] Since Aristotle's various observations on the qualitative part of tragedy known as thought are offered in different parts of the *Poetics*, it would seem wise to bring them all together at this point so that we may take them all in at a glance and seek to gain a fuller understanding of them by drawing from them such inferences as will conduce to that end. Thought is a species of invention which, when set forth in language, serves to prove whether a thing is or is not,¹ to enunciate some universal truth, to maximize or minimize some matter, or to arouse the emotions, such as pity, anger, and the like.² In the *Poetics* Aristotle is silent on the ways in which all this is accomplished, for he had treated rhetorical matters in his work on rhetoric, they being the proper concern of the art of rhetoric and only an accessory concern of the art of poetry. The fact is that the element of thought in the speeches which the ancient poets put in the mouths of their characters was not handled with the same rhetorical skill now found in the speeches framed by the poets of our own time; the ancient poets were content to let their characters argue like ordinary citizens, i.e., to let them use only such arguments as would naturally occur to a layman unschooled in rhetoric and well informed only in the

affairs of the city.³ Thought reveals the ethical qualities of the various agents, so that it is thanks to it more than to any other qualitative part of tragedy that we can recognize the action as morally good or bad, and it seems to be the cause that brings the action into being.⁴ Thought is one of the six qualitative parts of tragedy, and just as the other five appear to be distinct species of tragedy but are not, so thought appears to be a species of tragedy since it may pervade the whole body of a tragedy and seems to fill every part of it. The place assigned to it among the qualitative parts is the third, after plot and character, since in inventing the thought the poet should shape it to suit the action and the speaker's character, which have precedence over it. The language put in the speaker's mouth need not be very ornate. It must not attract more attention than the thought, otherwise the thought would be deprived of its proper dignity, for if thought ranks higher among the qualitative parts of tragedy than language, things should be so managed that language will not appear to outrank thought.

This is the sum of Aristotle's observations on the subject, though his wording is somewhat more concise than ours. From them we proceed to draw a number of inferences.

(1) The thought which Aristotle undertakes to expound is that species of invention which concerns itself not with the telling of a story, but with proving and disproving. We point this out because there are some⁵ who believe that Aristotle is concerned with every type of thought that can be expressed in words, the type of which Hermogenes treats in his *De Formis* and which he calls not διάνοια but ἐνωϊα. The fact is, however, that if Aristotle's subject were thought in general, the kind employed in narrative as well as in rhetorical discourse, he would not have taken pains to distinguish thought from plot, which in epic poetry especially is embodied in language and can be comprehended only through the language. There are, then, two types of invention that employ language as a medium. The first is the plot, which in epic poetry employs the single medium of language. It is by means of words only, for example, that Virgil tells of Aeneas' departure from Sicily after the death of Anchises (*Aen.* 5. 746ff.) and of the tempest that overtook his fleet on its way to Italy and drove him, after the loss of some ships, off-course to the shores of Carthage (*Aen.* 1. 81ff.). The second is the type of invention by which one proves or disproves some point, maximizes or minimizes some matter, or moves another's emotions. Both in epic poetry and in tragedy this type employs the medium of language. An example of it may be found in the episode in the *Aeneid* (1. 94ff.) just referred to, where Aeneas cries how grievous it is for him to die at sea, where all his valor avails him nothing. I hold that in epic poetry the plot is manifested by language to a greater extent than it is in poetry of any other type, because in tragedy a large part of the action is manifested by the spectacle, so that it is unnecessary to put it in words, and the spectator is not wholly dependent upon the words spoken by the actors to follow the course of the story.

(2) The invention of the thought is properly the concern of the art of rhetoric and only incidentally of the art of poetry. The reason is not far to seek. The

invention of the plot is the concern of the art of poetry more than of any other art because the plot is of the essence of poetry; it is only to tell a story in its fulness that poetry concerns itself with thought, which is the main concern of the art of rhetoric and is the substance and soul of every division of that art. We must bear in mind, however, that the masters of rhetoric have treated the invention of thought, which in rhetoric is known simply as "invention," exactly as they have every other department of that art, that is to say, they have directed their attention to the three main types of rhetoric (deliberative, forensic, epideictic) in so far as they are practiced in public before a senate, a court, or a popular audience. They have never taught what rhetorical principles are to be observed when a person soliloquizes, engages in a private conversation, bewails some misfortune, prays, encourages another or strikes fear into him, and so on. Hence we cannot truthfully assert that the art of rhetoric as treated by Aristotle and others teaches us all that we need to know to frame speeches of the kind required by a poem, for the oratory taught by the art of rhetoric is different in nature from that suited to narrative or dramatic poetry, being more magniloquent. All we can say is that the art of rhetoric as we know it meets the poet's needs in so far as he may turn to it for part of what he needs to know to frame the less-than-magniloquent utterances suited to his characters. Cicero understood this, as is shown by the words he puts in the mouth of Antonius in his *De Oratore* (2. 16. 69): "And here, lest someone should think it strange that I offer no rules for so many important matters, I assert that as in the other arts—painting, for instance—when once the most difficult elements of each have been taught it is not necessary to teach the rest because they are either easier to master or just like them, etc." Perhaps when Aristotle says that the characters introduced into their tragedies by the older poets spoke like ordinary citizens and not like trained rhetoricians, i.e., that the use of thought made by the older poets was not identical with that made by the orators in their public oratory, he means precisely what Cicero meant in the passage just quoted. To make the two types of utterance indistinguishable is a fault, for, as we know, men use one style of expression in private and another in public.

(3) Even if the invention of thought as it concerns the art of poetry has been treated in the *Rhetoric*, or at least if the rhetorical doctrine necessary to the poet is to be found there, propriety still demands that the rhetorical inventions the poet devises for his characters be more modest and less magniloquent than the orator's and conform to the plain citizen's, not the orator's, modes of thought. In poetry, then, characters may speak either as ordinary citizens or as finished rhetoricians, but the poet whose characters speak as citizens is to be commended while the other is not. For this reason Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 10. 1. 90) denies the name of poet to Lucan, saying, "Lucan is fiery and vehement and notable for his general reflections, but, to be candid, he is rather to be numbered with the orators than with the poets." On the other hand the same Quintilian (*ibid.* 10. 1. 68) contradicts himself by praising Euripides for the very fault he cannot tolerate in Lucan: "For in language (for which he is censured by those who hold Sophocles to be superior in gravity,

elevation, and sonorousness) he approaches the oratorical style; he is rich in general ideas, and in those with philosophical matter he is the peer of the philosophers; in the give-and-take of argument he is comparable to any orator who has shown notable skill in the courts."

It might be well at this point to recognize three kinds of rhetorical invention: the kind suitable to poetry, and especially to tragedy, which is also the kind in use among ordinary citizens (Aristotle says that it was used by the early poets); the kind suitable to oratory (the rhetorical), which Aristotle says was also used by the later poets and for the use of which Quintilian denies the name of poet to Lucan and should have denied it to Euripides; and the kind suitable to philosophy, which was very often used—and to his blame—by Euripides.

(4) In poetry thought serves two functions, whereas in oratory it for the most part serves only one. In poetry, and especially in tragedy, its function is to demonstrate that a particular thing is or is not or that it is or is not of a certain kind. This is also its function in the oratory devoted to cases that are restricted as to the time, the place, and the persons involved and are called "hypotheses" (Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 3. 5. 7). In poetry, however, thought serves the additional function of formulating universal truths. This is not a principal concern of oratory, which enunciates truths of that sort only as a means to the end of proving some particular point, for as Quintilian (*ibid.*, 3. 5. 9–10) says, "In every special case there always inheres a general one, the genus being as something prior to the species." In tragedy, however, the universal truths, which are sometimes spoken by single characters, but generally by the chorus, are ends in themselves, which explains why tragedies contain so many of them. Horace understood that the stuff of the thought invented for the chorus should be or may be universal, saying (*Ars Poet.* 196–201):

Let it favor the good and unite the friendly,
 Let it curb the angry and cherish those who eschew evil,
 Let it praise the simple board and praise wholesome justice,
 The laws, and peace with its open gates.
 Let it keep secrets, and pray and exhort the gods
 That fortune return to the unhappy and forsake the proud.

(5) The thought should reveal the speaker's character. We naturally expect a person's character to reveal itself in various ways and especially in the thoughts he gives expression to, for out of a full heart the mouth speaketh, and the tongue often returns to rub the aching tooth. Aristotle knew that unless an orator is on his guard he will expose himself as the man he really is. For this reason he counsels the orator in the *Rhetoric*⁶ to take pains to portray himself as a person of good character so as not to risk being branded as a wicked man and thus undermining the audience's faith in his oratory. Two factors, then, character and thought, determine the quality of actions (6. 49b 36–50a 1), meaning that the characteristics manifested by what the agents do (the plot) and those manifested by the thoughts they give utterance to (thought)

determine the quality of those actions and enable us to recognize them as morally good or bad, transferring to the actions the moral qualities of the agents. Hence certain tragedies and epic poems in which character is the most prominent element are called (18. 56a 1) tragedies or epics of character.

(6) The tragic poet assigns himself no role in his own tragedy and therefore cannot speak his own thoughts. Roman comic poets, however, invented a new dramatic character, the speaker of the prologue, and through him spoke of themselves and their own concerns; and their invention has been adopted by some modern tragic poets. Both schools of poets are at fault, both having failed to recognize that the principle which forbids them to speak for themselves forbids them also to speak through others. (This principle is fully discussed in its proper place.) On the other hand it would seem that the epic poet, who tells his story in his own person, should be permitted to speak of himself and his own concerns as well as of his characters and theirs. Many epic poets have actually done so, but not Homer; and if his practice is as sound in this as in all other matters pertaining to the poet and the poet's art we cannot allow ourselves to applaud those epic poets who have spoken of themselves and their own concerns at the beginning or in the middle or at the end of their poems. Dante must also have disapproved of them. Only once in his poem (*Purg.* 30. 55ff.) does he mention his own name, and then with the apology that he has done so "of necessity." We must withhold our praise also from those epic poets who speak in their own person of persons and things in their poems not in the manner of a true narrator, i.e., not keeping within the limits which, as we have seen, were scrupulously observed by Homer, but in that of a passionate partisan, dealing out praise or blame or delivering judgements of whatever kind. In this respect poetry differs widely from rhetoric, for the orator may legitimately speak of himself and his own concerns and of other persons and theirs as often and for as long as he chooses, provided that his utterances lend strength to his cause.

(7) Rhetorical invention performs three functions: it reveals the orator's character, stirs the emotions, and proves or disproves some point.⁷ In poetry thought performs the same three functions, though there the speaker's rhetoric is much more concerned than the orator's with the revelation of ethos and the stirring of the emotions, especially pity and fear, for characters in a poem are swayed by more vehement passions than are legal advocates and the causes they plead are more often matters of life and death. They are also unlike advocates in that they are less often engaged in proving and disproving, for the disciplined capacity for inventing arguments is not the possession of everyone, but only of those who have mastered the art of rhetoric or who are logicians or philosophers. We may repeat, then, that poets who invent for their characters the sophisticated arguments appropriate to oratory are deserving of nothing but censure. The orator does not set about preparing his arguments until he has ascertained the basis of his question, which basis may be one of three: whether a thing is, what it is, or what kind of thing it is.⁸ In inventing arguments for his characters, the poet must follow the same procedure, for a character's arguments are also designed to prove whether a thing is, what

it is, or what kind of thing it is. To prove that a thing is or is not of a certain kind the speaker maximizes or minimizes, which is why Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1. 7) takes pains to name these two processes. The only other basis on which he is explicit is the first, whether a thing is or is not (*ibid.* 3. 17).

(8) In tragedy thought ranks third among the qualitative parts, being preceded by the plot and character and followed by language. The reasons for this ranking will be advanced in the proper place (p. 64). In rhetoric, however, thought holds the first rank. Everything in speech subserves the arguments; and it is to render them clearer and lend them greater validity that the orator makes use of language, reveals his ethos, and stirs the emotions of his audience.

(9) The light of the thought must not be obscured by the splendor of the language. Aristotle (24. 60b 4-5) may offer this counsel for either of two reasons. (a) If the ideas expressed by a character are to be common, popular, in the style of the plain citizen, and at the same time suited to the person who is made to give expression to them, the language must not be splendid and ornate and beyond the capabilities of the speaker, who is not a sophisticated orator. (b) The language must be considered faulty if it attracts more attention than the thought, for the language has been fashioned to serve the thought not to be served by it. On this subject Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 8 Preface 22-24) says: "But it often happens that our eloquence suffers as a result of our fastidiousness. The main reason for this is that the best language is that which is least far-fetched and strikes us with its simplicity and truth. For the words that are obviously the result of careful search and would be recognized as the products of ingenious artistry fail to attain the desired elegance and forfeit the reader's confidence because they obscure the sense and choke the good seed, as it were, with their luxuriance. For such is our love of words that we express circuitously what could be said straightforwardly, repeat what we have already said with all adequacy, burden the sense with many words where one would do, and think it better to suggest our meaning than to express it...."

I7

Language

[1.533] Aristotle now (20. 56b 2-34) proceeds to a discussion of all those aspects of language that can in any way be relevant to the art of poetry, though the matters he discusses may be of equal relevance to prose, i.e., to rhetoric, or even to other arts, like grammar, and to others than poets, like those who are learning to read.... Language is the fourth of the qualitative parts of tragedy and the last of those which are the peculiar concern of the poet. The discussion of it concludes Aristotle's discussion of tragedy....

The Kinds of Words and Figures of Speech

[2.23] So far (21. 57a 3-57b 1) Aristotle has discussed language as composed of four kinds of sounds: the divisible and the indivisible, and the significant and the non-significant.... He now (21. 57b 1-58a 7) proceeds to discuss it as consisting of words of various kinds: (1) Those current among the people among whom they first appeared and those that have been borrowed from other peoples.¹ These constitute a pair of kinds that may be called native and foreign. Aristotle calls the first "current" and the second "strange." (2) Those that have retained their original meaning and those that have been given a new one. These constitute a second pair of kinds which should be called stable or literal and metaphorical. Aristotle makes the designation "current" serve also for the words that retain their literal meaning. (3) Those that were formed in earlier times and those that were formed more recently. These constitute a third pair of kinds which might be called old and new. Aristotle calls the old "current" and the new "coined." (4) Those that have retained their natural form and those that suffered a modification. These constitute a fourth pair of kinds which might be called "unaltered" and "altered." Aristotle gives the designation of "current" to still another type of words, the unaltered, while he subdivides the altered into three species, the "lengthened," the "contracted," and the "modified." To these species, he might have added a fourth, the compound, which he omits to mention here because he has spoken of them incidentally elsewhere (21. 57a 31-57b 1). The first pair of kinds has reference to the people by whom the words are used, the second to their meaning, the third to their age, and the fourth to their form. Though Aristotle names also a kind of words which he calls "ornament," we will not say that there is still another pair of kinds consisting of words that are or are not ornamental, for he omitted to define the term, and it is not easy to divine the sense which he intended to assign to it....²

* * * * *

[2.27] Aristotle divides metaphors into four kinds (21. 57b 6-58a 7) according as the name of the genus is given to the species, that of the species to the genus, that of one species to another species, that of one thing to another by analogy. If we are to see whether Aristotle's discussion of the subject is adequate and whether he has said more or less than is appropriate, I have no choice but to undertake a general discussion of all the figures of speech and what they signify.

Two principal causes produce all the figures of speech, clearness and obscurity. Clearness produces figures in which the words convey clear meanings by two means, singularity and usage. I call singularity the factor that operates to give that single meaning extensive use. Obscurity produces figures in which the words convey obscure meanings by two means contrary to the two just

named, plurality and rarity. I call plurality the factor that operates to give a word more than one meaning and rarity the factor that operates to restrict the use of a word. Plurality, by which words come to signify more than one thing, is of two kinds, according as the things the words signify are similar or dissimilar. If they are similar, the words are of five kinds: ambiguous, borrowed, analogical, metaphorical, and simulative. If they are dissimilar, the words are of two more kinds: disproportionate and partitive. Thus plurality produces seven kinds of words; rarity produces seven others which convey not more than one meaning: old, new, foreign, transposed, modified, redundant, and defective. To these fourteen kinds³ are to be added fourteen more, seven of which are produced by singularity and are the contraries of those produced by plurality, and seven by extensive usage and are the contraries of those produced by rarity. Considered, therefore, from the point of view of their meanings, the various kinds of figures of speech total twenty-eight. Let us now consider each of them briefly. To consider them at length would be to fill a large volume or at least to repeat what we have already written in our *Essaminatione delle cose scritte nel quarto libro a Caio Herennio*,⁴ to which we refer any reader who desires a more extensive treatment of the subject.

(1) Ambiguous words are those that signify more than one thing. Words may be ambiguous when used both singly and in groups. Οὐρεός (25. 61a 10), for instance, may signify "mule" or "sentinel"; and the line (Petrarch, *Canz.* 164), "Notte il carro stellato in giro mena," may mean either that the night is drawn in a circular course by the starry car or that the starry car is drawn in a circular course by the night. Ambiguous word combinations thus differ from ambiguous single words in that they offer no clue by which we may determine which of their meanings is the proper one. Aristotle makes no mention of them in the *Poetics*. (2) Borrowed words are those with two meanings, the first proper to the language in which they originated and the second to a second language. Though no mention is made of them by Aristotle in the passage under consideration, an example of them is offered in a later one (25. 61a 12), where he points out that εἶδος, in the clause εἶδος μὲν ἔην κακός used by Homer (*Il.* 10. 316) in describing Dolon, means "countenance" in the Cretan dialect and "body" in the Attic. A full discussion of these words⁵ will be found in our reply to Annibal Caro. (3, 4) Analogical words are not recognized as a special kind by Aristotle. Yet they not only constitute a peculiar kind but are also a source of metaphorical words, and we cannot understand the metaphorical unless we first understand the analogical. Analogical words signify more than one thing, the one they first call to mind and another similar to it. They differ from the metaphorical in this, that whereas both their meanings are quite plain, one of the meanings of metaphorical words, the one derived from the analogy, is hidden and obscure. And though it would seem that analogies are invented to produce clearness rather than obscurity, we have nevertheless shown in our *Essaminatione*⁶ that they make and must be held to make for obscurity. When, therefore, we undertake to produce an analogy we must begin by finding something similar to the thing we desire to clarify in something different from it. To use Aristotle's own example of a proportional or reciprocal

metaphor (21. 57b 20–22), if we wish to name the shield of Mars analogically we must begin by seeking what in the cup of Bacchus is similar to the shield of Mars and we shall find that the cup defends Bacchus from thirst as the shield defends Mars from wounds. The cup, then, is similar to the shield in that it is a means of defense. It is also similar in being the attribute of Bacchus, for the shield is the attribute of Mars. This similarity produces plurality, and the plurality expands when the analogy is fully expressed, as in the proposition, "As the cup defends Bacchus from thirst and is his attribute, so the shield defends Mars from wounds and is his attribute." The plurality contracts when the analogy is expressed in one of these two ways: "As the cup defends Bacchus from thirst and is his attribute, so is it with the shield of Mars," or "As with the cup of Bacchus, the shield defends Mars from wounds and is his attribute." Finally it contracts further when the analogy is expressed in the following fashion: "What the cup is to Bacchus the shield is to Mars." If the plurality contracts still more there is a transition from analogy to metaphor. The metaphor may take two forms: (a) one with and one without the copula, as in "The shield of Mars is the cup of Bacchus" or "The shield of Mars the cup of Bacchus" (this type of metaphor we discussed extensively in our reply to Annibal Caro),⁷ or (b) by naming only the thing that is different from Mars' normal defense and attribute, "The cup of Mars."

Analogies or metaphors may be divided into eight species, according to the end for which they are introduced. The ends may be any one of the following: (a) Clearness. We are sometimes obliged to use an analogical or metaphorical term to name a thing which has no name of its own. Thus the Romans called the bud of the vine *gemma* (gem) and we call it *occhio* (eye). (b) Variety. We may use an analogical or metaphorical term not because a thing has no name of its own or because the metaphorical term makes for greater clearness, but because we wish to give our style variety. Thus we do not lack a perfectly suitable name for the rudder of a ship or the bridle of a horse. Yet we say, "As the rudder steers the ship, so the bridle governs the horse" or "as the bridle governs the horse, so the rudder steers the ship" (analogy). We also speak of the rudder as "the ship's bridle" and of the bridle as "the horse's rudder" (metaphor). This species of metaphor is the one which Aristotle has termed proportional (21. 57b 16ff.), for the two terms (rudder and bridle) are interchangeable and equally well known. (c) Ostentation. A poet may use analogies or metaphors derived from the arts and sciences, which ordinary people neither understand nor refer to in daily life, merely to display his learning. Such analogies and metaphors are frequently met in Dante's *Comedy* and sometimes in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. (d) Nobility. We may use an analogy or a metaphor to ennoble a thing that may or may not be noble in itself, and in so doing lightly disregard the risk of lapsing into obscurity as long as we achieve our end. Examples are the following analogy in Virgil (*Aen.* 4. 143–44):

As when Apollo deserts wintry Lycia and the streams of Xanthus
And visits his mother's Delos...

and this other (*Aen.* 1. 498-99):

As on the banks of the Eurotas or on the peaks of Cynthus
Diana leads the dance...

In such analogies there is no question that the less known is used to shed light on the better known, but they are applauded because the less-known thing is nobler than the other. (e) Seemliness. If we find it necessary to speak of an obscene subject, one that would bring a blush to the reader's cheek if we called things by their proper names, we may resort to an analogy or a metaphor, comparing the unseemly thing to something seemly. Virgil is commended for having used this device in one of the *Georgics* (3. 135-37); nor are we to withhold praise from Boccaccio for resorting to the same device in the *Decameron*. (f) Obscurity. We may sometimes conceal a clear idea under an obscure analogy or metaphor. Lovers more often than not employ this device when speaking of their secrets. (g) Debasement. We may sometimes use an analogy or metaphor to debase a noble thing. (h) Obscenity. By the use of obscene analogies and metaphors we may make a seemly thing appear obscene. I do not deny that this classification might be improved by increasing or reducing the number of its species, but for the time being we do not find it unacceptable.

(5) Simulative words are those which signify two contrary things, one the thing they normally signify and the other its contrary. An example of them may be found in Virgil (*Aen.* 4. 93-95):

Splendid indeed is the praise and honorable the spoils
Won by you and your son, and your name great and worthy of
remembrance,
If one woman is vanquished by the treachery of two gods.

So much for words signifying two similar things. Let us now proceed to a consideration of those which designate two dissimilar things.

(6) Disproportionate words designate two dissimilar things, for if I say, "I have endured ten thousand hardships" when I have actually endured only a hundred, the expression "ten thousand" means ten thousand and also one hundred, which are unequal numbers. It should be noted that disproportionate words may produce not only hyperboles but also understatements. (7) Partitive words designate two dissimilar things; for the whole may be used to designate the part, the part the whole, the species the genus, and the genus the species.... This type of word comprises many species, their number being equal to the number of parts comprised in the whole and of species comprised in the genus. They differ from disproportionate words in that the latter have no fixed terminus toward which or from which they move, a terminus such as the whole or the genus is for the partitive words. Aristotle failed to mention contradictory and disproportionate words, and also the partitive in so far as they designate the whole by the part or the part by the whole, mentioning

only such disproportionate words as designate the species by the genus and the genus by the species (21. 57b 6-9). What is more, it was unnecessary for him to mention words which designate one species by another, for the use of such words produces the kind of metaphor which he calls proportional.... (8) The redundant.⁸ We may use more words than are needed, and thus we have a species of words that may be called redundant. Pleonasm is perhaps to be classed with these words. (9) The incomplete. We may use fewer words than are needed and thus have a species of words that we call incomplete. Examples of them may be found in Virgil's *Novimus et qui te...* and *Quos ego...* (*Ecl.* 3. 8; *Aen.* 1. 135). These last two species are not mentioned by Aristotle. Our remarks will make quite clear what figures of speech Aristotle unjustifiably disregarded and what kinds he discussed inadequately....

17b

Metaphors and Analogies

[2.36] To gain a more thorough understanding of metaphor by also taking Aristotle's treatment of the subject into account (21. 57b 6-16), we must consider the following matters. We perceive individuals, and we group individuals into species and species into genera. Now the name of one genus may be given to another genus, to one of its species or to a species under another genus, to an individual in one of its own species or to one in a species under another genus. The name of a genus, then, may be used in place of five other names. In like manner the name of a species may be given to its genus, to a different genus, to another species within its own genus, to a species in a different genus, to an individual within itself, and to an individual in a different species. Thus the name of a species may be used in place of six other names. Finally the name of an individual may be given to its genus, to a different genus, to its own species, to a different species, to another individual within its own species, or to another individual outside that species. Thus the name of an individual may be used in place of six other names. In all, then, the number of possible transfers of names is seventeen, and not three, as Aristotle seems to imply.¹ These must be divided into two groups, the first of which will contain eleven and the second six. The eleven composing the first group are the transfers of names from one genus to another, from a genus to a species outside it, from a genus to an individual outside it, from a species to a species under a different genus, from a species to another species within the same genus, from a species to a genus not its own, from a species to an individual in a different species, from an individual to a genus not its own, from an individual to a species not its own, from an individual to another individual within the same species, and from an individual to another individual under a different species. The six composing the second group are the transfers of names from a genus to one of its own species, from a genus to one of its own individuals, from a species to one of its own individuals, from a species to its own genus, from

an individual to its own genus, and from an individual to its own species.

This type of metaphor which Aristotle calls the analogical is to be drawn from the first group, as is the figure which other rhetoricians call simply "metaphor," which is really the same figure as Aristotle's. Such metaphors link two similar things. Figures which link two dissimilar things—the genus to the species, the species to an individual, etc.—are to be drawn from the second group. That this should be so will become obvious to all who will consider metaphors and figures drawn from the second group. To be sure, when we say that metaphors, which are the result of the eleven transfers of names brought together under the first group, link similar things, we mean only those metaphors which result from giving the name of one individual to another individual or of one species to another species. What makes it possible for one individual to be given the name of another individual is that they are both members of the same species, which is what the two things have in common. Thus, Caligula (Suetonius, *G. Caligula* 23. 2) used to call Livia Augusta "Ulysses in the guise of a woman," and he could do so because Ulysses and Livia were both astute and thus were individuals in the species formed by the astute. In like manner a species can be given the name of another species because they are included under a common genus. [Thus if we call monks wolves, we can do so because the two species of beings belong to the same genus, the genus composed of the gluttonous and insatiable.]² This should show why all eleven transfers of names in the first group always link two similar things; for if, as in the two examples offered, the species or genus is the same, they must link two similar things, that is, each of them will bring out the thing which both have in common as members of the same species or genus. The same holds true if the name of a species should be given to an individual outside that species. This was done by Our Lord when he said (Luke 13:32), "Go ye, and tell that fox..." meaning Herod. In this expression the name of the fox, a species, is given to Herod, an individual. The point the two have in common is fraudulence, which is the genus common to foxes and to Herod considered not as the individual Herod, but as one of the fraudulent. For the genus composed of fraudulent animals includes two species, that of the fox and another of men like Herod.

* * * * *

[2.39] When two things have something in common, they may, as we have shown, form the elements of a metaphor. For this reason a metaphor may be formed not only with two things having one thing in common, but, as Aristotle now indicates (21. 57b 16–25), with two more which depend on them if the latter two also have one thing in common, and with a fifth and sixth element depending on the second pair if they have one thing in common. In Aristotle's example we have the four terms "life," "old age," "day," and "evening." The fourth of these is used in place of the second, and we have the metaphor "the evening of life." But it is also possible to have four terms which will give rise to two metaphors, one arising out of the use of the fourth term

in place of the second, and the other out of the use of the third in place of the first. Consider, for instance, these lines from Petrarch (*Canz.* 60):

The noble tree which I loved mightily for many years
While its fair boughs held me not in disdain
Kept my feeble genius in bloom
In its shade....

We have here four terms: Laura, Laura's favor, the noble tree (the laurel), and the shade. The tree, which is the third term, is used in place of Laura, who is the first, and the shade, which is the fourth term, is used in place of her favor, which is the second. What makes these metaphors possible is the things which each pair of terms has in common: Laura and the laurel are alike in name and in other respects, and her favor and the shade are alike in that the favor attracts Petrarch, and the shade the shepherds and their flocks. It is also possible to have six terms, of which the fourth will be used in place of the first, the fifth in place of the second, and the sixth in place of the third. Three such metaphors may be found in the following lines in Dante (*Par.* 25. 1-6):

If it ever happens that the sacred poem
To which both Heaven and earth have set hand
So that it has made me lean for many years
Should overcome the cruelty that bars me
From the fair sheepfold where I slept a lamb,
A foe to the wolves that make war against it....

The six terms are: Florence, Dante, wicked citizens, the sheepfold, the lamb, and the wolves. "Sheepfold" is used in place of Florence because the two have this in common, that they are both shelters, the first for sheep and lambs, the second for men. "Lamb" is used in place of Dante because the two are alike in that they are both innocent. "Wolves" is used in place of wicked citizens because the two are alike in that both classes of creatures are hostile, the first to lambs and sheep, the second to the city and its good citizens.

* * * * *

[2.40] It is not always true, as Aristotle holds (21. 57b 18-19), that in analogies in which "the second term corresponds to the first as the fourth to the third, the fourth term may be used in place of the second and the second in place of the fourth." Consider the four terms bird, wings, tree, and branches. Wings are to birds as branches are to trees. But it would make nonsense to say that birds are under the branches of the bird or that the shepherds are standing under the wings of the tree. Or consider the second group of terms: beauty, love, sun, light. Love is to beauty as light is to the sun. Yet it would again make nonsense to say, "Beauty sheds light on me" instead of, "Beauty awakens my love," or "The sun awakens the love of our hemisphere" instead of "The sun

sheds light on our hemisphere." This proves that analogies are not good sources of metaphor. On the other hand, a good metaphor, in which the two terms have something in common, can be turned into an analogy, and one of its terms may be used in place of the other. Thus "evening" and "old age" are alike in that they are each an end, the one of the day and the other of life. For this reason we have the analogy: Evening is to day as old age is to life. We now transfer two of the terms and we have "the evening of life" and "the old age of the day." But "wings" and "branches" cannot be said to be alike in being shelters, the first for birds and the second for shepherds and their flocks, for shepherds and their flocks are sheltered in one way by the branches and birds in another by their wings. For this reason we cannot exchange the one term for the other and get a beautiful metaphor, but only absurdities like "the wings of the tree" and "the branches of the bird." Equally absurd are the two metaphors: "The sun awakens the love of our hemisphere" and "Beauty sheds light upon me"; and they are absurd because the points which love awakened by beauty and the light shed by the sun have in common are not exactly alike.

* * * * *

[2.41] Aristotle now asserts (21. 57b 20-21) that since "the cup bears the same relation to Bacchus that the shield does to Mars" the cup may metaphorically be called "the shield of Bacchus" and the shield "the cup of Mars." This conclusion we find unacceptable, for though cup and shield are analogous in that the one protects Bacchus from thirst and the other Mars from wounds, the two objects are not analogous in every way. They are both alike in being attributes of gods, but the shield is a glorious attribute and the cup a shameful one. In like manner they are both alike in being means of defense, but the shield is a glorious means of defense and the cup an infamous one. It therefore follows that "cup of Mars" and "shield of Bacchus" are bad metaphors, to be used only for humorous or satirical ends. We hold this to be true despite the fact that Aristides (*Dionysus* 8) praises Bacchus by asserting that "he gives proof of his great prowess by wearing a fawn skin instead of a lion skin, and carrying a staff instead of a lance and a cup instead of a shield, as if for him tippling were as glorious as fighting and there were no great difference between a battle and a triumph...."

* * * * *

[2.42] Aristotle has said that if we have four terms of which the second stands in the same relation to the first as the fourth to the third, we may produce a metaphor by using the fourth term in place of the second and the second in place of the fourth. But because the thing designated by the second or fourth term sometimes has no name of its own, he now adds (21. 57b 25-26) that it is then impossible to produce a metaphor by using these terms interchangeably. This, however, does not exclude the formation of a metaphor by giving the name of the thing with a name of its own to the thing without a

name. This can be done because the two things are analogous. His example is that of the sower, who casts forth the seed, and of the sun, which casts forth its rays. The relationship which exists between casting forth the seed, which is called sowing, and the sower exists also between casting forth rays, which has no name of its own, and the sun. In the circumstances only one metaphor is possible: "The sun sows its rays."

There are, then, three types of metaphors. The first type consists of those based upon analogies in which the second and fourth terms designate things having names of their own, such analogies, for instance, as the following: "Life is to old age as day is to evening." In such analogies the second and fourth terms are interchangeable, and we may use any of them as the source of two metaphors, being able to speak of "the old age of day" and "the evening of life." The second type consists of those based upon an analogy in which either the second or the fourth term designates a thing without a name of its own. Analogies of this type are, "The sower is to sowing as the sun to casting forth its rays" and "Snow is to whiteness as hair is to hoariness." According to Aristotle an analogy of this type can be used as the source of only one metaphor, so that the only metaphors that we may draw from those just given us are, "The sun sows its rays" and "The hoariness of snow." For if we said, "The sower is casting forth the seed-grain" or spoke of "the whiteness of some one's hair," our metaphors would not have their source in an analogy; they would be the result of transferring the name of the genus to the species, the type of metaphor of which Aristotle found an example (21. 57b 9-11) in the last book of the *Odyssey*.³ It seems, however, that even analogies of this kind could be made to yield metaphors of the first type if, with the generic verb we used an adverb formed from the thing with which it is usually associated or, with the generic noun we used an adjective of the same kind. We should then say, "The sower casts forth the seed-grain radially" and should speak of "snowy hair." The third type consists of those drawn from analogies in which the second and fourth terms designate things without names of their own, as they do in "Snow is to whiteness as milk is to whiteness." It would seem that an analogy of this sort could not be the source of any metaphors of whatever type. Yet by using adjectives of the kind just described we could have metaphors, even metaphors based upon an exchange of terms, saying "snowy milk" and "milky snow." It is also customary to use substantives in place of the adjectives, as in "The lady whose face is snow and whose hair is gold...."

17c

On Diction

[2.61] Aristotle assumes that poetic diction should be at once "clear and not mean" [22. 58a 18]. Though he is here concerned with language as a qualitative part of tragedy and could, therefore, limit himself to a discussion of the language appropriate to tragedy, he nevertheless extends his range to include

the type of language appropriate to dithyrambic and epic poetry. These three species of poetry seem all to require a diction that is clear and not mean because in them the characters who speak and are spoken of are either gods or royal personages and the matters treated are exalted and above the ordinary. I do not believe, however, that the diction appropriate to these three species of poetry is appropriate also to comedy, for the comic poet should as far as possible bring out the lowliness of the private characters and affairs which his comedy represents. Hence there are those who temper their praise of Terence because in their judgment he eschewed the language of the common people more assiduously than is fitting in a comic poet, laying the blame for this upon Scipio and Laelius, both men of noble birth in the habit of using only elevated speech, who assisted him in composing his comedies (Suetonius, *Vita Terentii* 3). Clearness and elevation, then, constitute the perfection of diction only for the three species of poetry just named and others like them and not for poems of all kinds.

We must also take care to interpret Aristotle's words with sobriety. Poetic diction, he says, must be clear, meaning, surely, that it must be clear generally and not in every part of a poem and in the mouth of every speaker. Would it be appropriate for a prophet in a tragedy to speak clearly, or for a chorus to sing odes that contained no obscurities, that did not contain many more obscurities than other utterances? Observe also that according to Aristotle the diction must be clear and not as clear as possible. A style is made as clear as possible by current words, but the species of poetry in question cannot be entirely composed of current words, and therefore their language cannot be perfectly clear. But a clear style is not inappropriate to them, and it may be achieved by using either a single class of words, like the lengthened or the contracted, or words of other kinds combined in due proportion with the current. We might also consider whether in saying that the language of poetry must not be mean Aristotle deliberately refrained from saying that it must be elevated so as to avoid the need of specifying the degree of elevation that should be attained, perhaps by the predominant use of one class of words or another, some making for a more and others for a less elevated style.

Assuming, then, that in tragedy and in epic and dithyrambic poetry the highest excellence of diction is clearness without meanness, Aristotle proceeds to investigate (22. 58a 18-59a 8) which class or classes of words make for such excellence. His method is to consider each class separately and to eliminate those that he finds unsuitable. He eliminates current words because though clear in the highest degree they are not without meanness, and metaphors and strange words because though not mean they are not for that reason clear, being in fact obscure to such an extent that metaphors may produce riddles and strange words barbarisms. Aristotle finds the most suitable words to be the lengthened, the contracted, and the altered, all of which are clear in so far as they are similar to the current and not mean in so far as they are dissimilar to them. Observe that Aristotle has not accorded separate consideration either to ornamental or newly coined words. All he has done is to say explicitly of the ornamental and implicitly of the newly coined (in connec-

tion with metaphors and strange, lengthened, contracted, and altered words) that they are not mean. The excuse he may offer for this oversight is that the *Poetics* is no more than a collection of brief and tentative notes laying no claim to exhaustiveness.

In conclusion, current words possess only clearness, and all other classes of words are without meanness. Of the latter classes some possess clearness and some do not. Thus the poet who will combine in due proportion current words with those of the other classes will achieve the most desirable diction, a diction that is clear without being mean. For such diction is not achieved by the exclusive use of [lengthened], contracted, and altered words, but by a just combination of current words and all the others.

* * * * *

[2.63] Since Aristotle contrasts current with strange or foreign words, we shall do well to include under the term "current" all words that are well known and in common use among a people, whether they are metaphors, borrowings from another nation, ornamental, newly coined, or altered; for the very fact that they are in current use distinguishes them from foreign words and from words that are imperfectly naturalized. In his *Rhetoric* (3. 2), Aristotle would have us imagine that it is with words as with men, some of whom are permanent residents of a city, its citizens, and others visitors, i.e., foreigners or travelers. The citizens are so intimately a part of the community that they are not highly regarded, whereas foreigners and travelers are far from being well known and for that very reason are held in high esteem. Thus we tend to despise words in common use because, being on everyone's lips, they are extremely well known, and to prize those that have been borrowed from other languages, have been given a new meaning, have been partly altered in form, or have been newly coined.

But though the above analogy seems most appropriate and though it is doubtless in the light of it that Aristotle calls all words except the current "strange," nevertheless it seems to me that it applies to only a few classes of words and may well seem so to others if it is rightly viewed. Foreigners seem to us important and worthy of great esteem because, having never before seen them, we do not know them, and what enables us to recognize them as foreigners and strangers is their form and appearance. Similarly foreign words, which are called "strange," seem to us important and worthy of great esteem because we have never before seen them, and what enables us to recognize them as foreign and strange is their form and appearance. With words of this kind we may and in fact should class old words which have fallen into disuse, the newly coined, the lengthened, the contracted, the altered, and the compound, for when first heard such words are also wholly or partly new to us in form or appearance. But words of other classes, like those which Aristotle has called metaphorical and those which I have called analogical, metaphorical, ambiguous, borrowed, contradictory, disproportionate, and partitive bear no resemblance to foreign words or persons. They are, rather, like the members

of a city's working class, each of whom pursues a single craft and is known as the practitioner of one craft, or of more than one craft and is known as the practitioner of several. The analogy continues to be valid if we consider further that the man of one craft may master a second which he will pursue either in place of the first or concurrently with it, and the man of several may discard all but one. Thus analogical words may be said to continue in their old craft, signifying one thing, and to master a new one, signifying a second thing. On the other hand the metaphorical, the borrowed, the contradictory, the disproportionate, and the partitive discard their old crafts and master new ones, that is, a word of any one of these classes has discarded its old signification and has assumed a new one. But the ambiguous, which signify more than one thing, and in this are like the masters of several crafts, may restrict themselves to one meaning, and thus become like the masters of a single craft. Hence the words which we call foreign and Aristotle calls strange are really of several types: those that are truly foreign, those that are foreign in appearance, those that have assumed a second meaning, those that have discarded their old meaning and have assumed a new one, and those that have discarded all old meanings but one.

Aristotle says of current words (22. 58a 18-21) that "they are indeed the clearest, but [that] they are also mean." This is so not absolutely but only in the sense that they are clear and mean as compared with words of other kinds. For, compared with one another, some current words may be said to be elevated and some mean, the latter being those current among the vulgar herd and the former those in use among the upper classes. Both kinds of current words are, to be sure, used by all members of the community, yet the first kind are less often on the lips of the lower classes than on those of the higher, and the higher classes make less use of the current words that are frequently heard among the lower. A current word is said to be noble or mean according to the thing it designates. A word will be called noble if it designates something noble, pleasing, and honorable, and mean if it designates something base, abominable, and shameful. Finally it is an indication and almost the proof of a word's meanness that it has never passed from the lips of the populace to the pages of an honored writer, just as it is an indication and almost the proof of its nobility that it has been used by writers of authority and fame....

* * * * *

[2.65] Aristotle asserts (22. 58a 21-22) that when a poet's language "contains foreign words¹ it is noble and purged of meanness." This is generally but not invariably true. Metaphors and strange and altered words do not always make for elevation and dignity; in fact metaphors derived from base, odious, and shameful sources make for meanness. The same effect is also produced by strange words when used by a person who would be unable to replace them with equivalents from his own language, as may be verified in the writings of many contemporary authors. Finally, altered words rob an author's language of its dignity when the alterations are similar to those they undergo in the

mouths of the vulgar. An excellent example of this may be found in Boccaccio's story (*Dec.* 8. 2) of the priest of Varlungo.

* * * * *

[2.65] Aristotle goes on to say (22. 58a 22-23), "I call words 'foreign' when they are strange, metaphorical, lengthened, and of every other [kind] except the current. But if anyone should bring all such words together the result will be riddles and barbarisms." Now Aristotle has just said that a poet's language must be both clear and elevated, and that current words are clear but lacking in elevation, whereas foreign words are elevated but are for the most part obscure. Having said this he should have continued by showing how clear words may be used to lend a style elevation and elevated words to lend it clearness. These instructions are lacking, and I am therefore constrained to believe that the second of the above sentences needs to be explained thus: "But though current words are lacking in elevation and foreign words in clearness, if some one should combine them in due measure he will without doubt make them such, i.e., clear and elevated. But if he uses only words of a single kind, the result will be a style marred by vulgarisms, riddles, barbarisms, and neologisms; for current words will make for vulgarisms and metaphors will produce riddles, strange words barbarisms, and the newly coined neologisms...." Now a vulgarism is a mean expression resulting from the use of words current among the common people in the manner in which they are used by them. Riddles, barbarisms, and neologisms are all unintelligibly obscure expressions resulting, the first from the use of words in a metaphorical sense, the second from the use of foreign, and the last from that of newly coined words. This passage in the *Poetics*, then, lacks instructions on how to lend elevation to current words and clarity to the foreign, and it fails to teach what name should be given to the obscurity proceeding from newly coined words and its cause. It does not seem probable that these matters were deliberately ignored by Aristotle either in this passage or in another, for without them this treatise remains incomplete. Our author goes on to say that the words which owe their dignity to their unintelligible obscurity sometimes become mean not because they are intrinsically such but because of the manner in which they are unintentionally used, as when they are used too frequently or in contexts in which they are out of place. They then move the audience to laughter, as they would not do if they had not been made mean by the poet's unskilful use of them.

Let us now examine Aristotle's doctrine for the benefit of the poets. He first says (22. 58a 34-58b 3), or should have said, that the combination in due measure of words of all kinds imparts to language clarity and elevation. I do not deny that this is or may be true; on the other hand I deny that without further elaboration this statement can be of any practical use to the poet. If we desire to compound a medicine that will be effective against a certain malady, it will not suffice to know that we should combine the juices of two particular herbs in due measure; we shall need to know whether they are to

be combined in equal portions or, if not that, the exact proportion of the one to the other. Aristotle, then, should not simply have said that the various types of words should be combined or, as he will presently say, that each type should be used in moderation; he should have specified the exact proportion in which words of certain types may be combined with those of certain others.

Since Aristotle says that a riddle consists of metaphors and must contain two contradictory ideas, we must note that riddles are obscure statements and that they are of two kinds according to the cause of the obscurity. One cause of obscurity is the contradictory meanings of the words, the other the uncertainty as to which of them is the true one. The obscurity due to the first cause is of two kinds, the one due to intrinsic and the other to extrinsic factors. A riddle is intrinsically obscure when its language seems to express contradictory ideas. Thus, one of Boccaccio's characters says (*Dec.* 3. 8), "Sir, if God had given me a husband or had not given me a husband, your counsels might render it easy for me to enter upon that course." And Petrarch says (*Canz.* 134),

And I clasp nothing and embrace the whole world.

To have and not to have a husband, to clasp nothing and to embrace the whole world are contradictory ideas inherent in the language of the riddle. A riddle is extrinsically obscure when it seems to contradict phenomena that have an existence independent of its expression. Thus we may hear that there is a thing which at birth and at death is larger than in the heyday of its life. This statement contains no contradictory ideas, but it contradicts a phenomenon which everyone observes, viz., that animals are smaller at birth and, for the most part, at death than they are in their prime. This phenomenon exists independently of the language of the riddle, and it is therefore difficult to see that the thing meant is the shadow. The obscurity due to the uncertainty as to which of the two meanings is the true one is also of two kinds, the one in which the uncertainty is caused by the intrinsic meaning of the words and the other in which it is caused by the things which the words designate and which exist independently of those words. An obscurity or riddle is of the first kind when its language may express more than one idea and we are unable to tell which is the true one. Two riddles of this kind are Petrarch's line (*Canz.* 164)

Notte il carro stellato in giro mena,

and the famous oracle, "By crossing the river Halys Croesus shall destroy great forces,"² each of which expresses two ideas, while neither offers a clue as to which is the true one. For Petrarch's line may mean either that the night draws the starry car in a circular course or that the night is drawn in a circular course by the starry car, and the oracle that Croesus will destroy either his own forces or the enemy's. In these riddles each of the contradictory ideas is a reasonable one, and so the Pythia could say (Herodotus 1. 91) that Croesus complained of Apollo without just cause, for if he had desired his deliberations to be firmly

based he should have sent the second messenger to the oracle to inquire whether the great forces that were doomed to destruction were Cyrus' or his own.

A riddle is of the second kind when the words have a single meaning and yet may appropriately be taken to signify a second thing not denoted by them, so that we are not certain which meaning is the true one. Such riddles may be subdivided into three kinds. (a) The name of the species is given to the genus, as in Dante's lines,

And if your vain thoughts had not been
As water of the Elsa around your mind
And the pleasure they gave you as Pyramus to the mulberry....,³

where the poet names the specific manner in which the white mulberry was turned a dark color and speaks of it as if it were common to every such change of color. (b) The name of the genus is given to the species. (c) The name of one species is given to another species. An example of each of these is found in the famous one adduced by Aristotle both in the *Poetics* and in the *Rhetoric*: "I saw a man glue brass on a man with fire, and so securely that the brass drank his blood."⁴ Here "man," a generic noun, is used in place of "barber," a specific one, and the same may be said for the use of "brass" for "cupping instrument," which is brass in a certain form. In both cases the specific meanings are not to be found in the words of the riddle and therefore are difficult to find. Next, the specific word "gluing" is used as the name of the specific operation of applying the cupping instrument to the human flesh, an operation for which there is no specific name; and "drinking," which is the specific name for the taking of liquids by animals, is used as the name of the action by which the cupping instrument draws blood. The two specific meanings thanks to which the riddle is solved are not explicit in the wording.

For the time being I need say no more on this subject, for what I have said seems to me sufficient to explain Aristotle's meaning and to show that the riddle in its ideal form is perhaps a self-contradictory statement which would seem to be made possible by the use of words in a metaphorical sense. Thus in the statement in Boccaccio, "Sir, if God had given me a husband or had not given me one," the term "husband" is used first in a metaphorical and then in its literal sense, and the meaning is, "If God had given me a wise man capable of ruling both himself and his wife or had not given me my present husband." But though this is the riddle in its ideal form, it is not for that reason the only possible one. As we have shown, a riddle may not express a self-contradiction or an impossibility. Aristotle's, "I saw a man glue brass on a man with fire" is a riddle of this type. Moreover it does not seem true that every riddle is composed of metaphorical terms, and this is so especially of those riddles which give rise to uncertainty as to which of their two possible meanings is the true one. For this uncertainty may be due (a) to the departure from conventional punctuation⁵ and to the similarity in the forms of different cases, as in the line,

Notte il carro stellato in giro mena,

or (b) to the absence of one or more words essential to the sense, as in "By crossing the river Halys Croesus shall destroy great forces," where it remains uncertain whether the forces to be destroyed are Croesus' or the enemy's because the statement lacks the words "his own." It would seem, then, that riddle may, like the one just quoted, be without metaphor. Yet it might be shown that this riddle contains a metaphor consisting in the transference of the name of the genus to the species. We might say that "great forces" is the genus of which the forces of Croesus and Cyrus are two species. The riddle, then, consists in the uncertainty as to which of the two species is signified by the name of the genus....

* * * * *

[2.72] The next subject to be discussed is that of barbarisms, which result from the use of strange words. Before we proceed with our discussion, however, it is well to note that in his *Attic Nights* (5. 20) Aulus Gellius says that he has never found the word βαρβαρισμός in a reputable Greek writer. From this statement we may draw one of three inferences: that he had never (as I believe) read the *Poetics*; that having read it he had forgotten that the term appears there; or that he had never found the term in a great writer as signifying the opposite thing from "solecism," which is the subject of the chapter in which the statement is made. For to Aristotle barbarisms are not what they are to the grammarians, i. e., errors in pronunciation which, as I have just said, are the opposites of solecisms, i. e., failures to observe the rules of simple grammar; to him they signify the unintelligible obscurity which proceeds from the use of foreign words. Thus in St. Paul (1 Cor. 14:11) a "barbarian" is one who fails to understand another because he speaks in a foreign tongue: "Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." And Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 1. 5. 8), who holds that the term may be taken in more than one sense, recognizes as legitimate the sense in which it is taken by Aristotle, saying: "one kind [of barbarisms] is due to the speaker's nationality, as when some one uses an African or a Spanish word in a Latin oration, calling, for instance, the iron tire of a wheel *cantus* (though Persius uses it as an accepted term); Catullus found *ploxenum* (a box) in the valley of the Po, and in Labienus' oration against Pollio (unless the author is Cornelius Gallius) *casamo* (a follower) is an importation from Gaul. As for the Sardinian *mastruca* (a garment made of skins) Cicero uses it only to put it down as ridiculous."

Since a barbarism is an unintelligible obscurity arising from the use of foreign words, and not all foreign words have the same power to obscure meaning, let us establish the number of classes into which foreign words may be divided and ascertain which make for greater and which for less obscurity than the rest. Having this knowledge we shall be in position to classify barbarisms and then to ascertain which kinds are more to be avoided than others. The first

thing to note is that foreign languages are of two kinds, the natural and the artificial. Languages which we call naturally foreign may belong to one of two classes. The first consists of those languages whose words differ from those of another to which they are being compared both in their substances and in their accidents. Thus to the Greeks Hebrew is a foreign language of this kind, for Hebrew words differ from the Greek not only in the letters (known among the Hebrews as radicals) which compose them and which constitute their bodies, but also in their endings, accents, cases, genders, and other such accidents. Words from such languages are the cause of the greatest unintelligible obscurity. The second consists of those languages whose words for the most part differ from those of another not in their substances but in their accidents. The corresponding words in language of this kind have the same radicals, but different accidents. Thus it is because of differences in the accidents and not in the substances of corresponding words that the Italian language is divided into the Roman, the Tuscan, the Romagnole, the Lombard, and other like dialects; and the same factors divide the Greek language into the Attic, the Ionic, the Aeolic, and the Dorian dialects. This second class of languages is divided into two, those which boast of great and highly esteemed writers in all their dialects, as did the Greeks, and those which have such writers only in one, as does the Italian, for in Italy no book is highly esteemed unless it is composed in Tuscan. The use of words from languages of this second class does not give rise to great obscurity, for the corresponding words in all of them are for the most part substantially alike, and this helps one to overcome the obscurity proceeding from differences in their accidents. I will not explain why I have chosen to call these languages "naturally foreign" because I believe that everyone may find the reason for himself. The words in these languages are what they are by nature, and are not made so by the writer who makes use of them.

Artificially foreign languages are also of two classes, according as they are artificial in meaning or in formation. A word is artificial in meaning when a writer has given it the meaning of a foreign word. Such a word is the Latin *fugio*, to which in the line (*Ecl.* 1. 4)

Nos patriam fugimus...

Virgil gave the meaning of *φεύγω*: "to be banished, to be driven out"; and Virgil's example was followed by Horace in the lines (*Carm.* 1. 7),

Teucer Salamina patremque
Cum fugeret....⁶

Words of this kind make for very great obscurity, especially when their new meanings are taken from languages with which we are unfamiliar. Words are artificial in formation when they have been newly coined with some foreign word as a model. Thus the Greeks formed *αὐτότατος* from *αὐτός*, and the Romans followed their example, forming *ipsissimus* from *ipse*. Such words are foreign

because they have been formed with foreign words as models. Words of this kind make for much less obscurity than do those of the preceding one. When each of these four kinds of words may and ought to be used is a question I have discussed at length in my *Ragioni*,⁷ to which I refer those of my readers who desire to pursue this inquiry further....

* * * * *

[2.76] Having shown that lengthened, contracted, and altered words are clear without being mean, i.e., that they possess the perfection of diction, Aristotle adds that Homer has been unjustly censured for using them, and by the elder Euclid among others. The reason for these censures, as reported by Aristotle (22. 58b 7–11), is that the license to use words of these kinds gives rise to a serious impropriety, in that it makes the composition of verse a very easy exercise. This is especially true when the metre is the hexameter, for by virtue of this license it is possible to change a natural iambic foot into a spondee. To this Aristotle makes no explicit reply, but he tacitly refutes it with the following argument. A poet is obliged to use diction that is clear and not mean without regard to the effect of his choice upon the nature of his task, i.e., on whether his task is thereby rendered easier or more difficult. Therefore Homer was unjustly censured for using diction of a certain type even though that diction made the composition of his lines an easier task than it might otherwise have been. But perhaps Aristotle might have argued further that since a poet is not free to lengthen, curtail, and alter all words indiscriminately, but only those that are susceptible of such alterations and in special circumstances, Euclid's criticism cannot touch Homer, who never failed to keep within the bounds of these restrictions. Therefore even if the poet is given the license to use lengthened, curtailed, and altered words, the work of composing verses is not as simple as Homer's critics suppose. We may conclude, then, that in Aristotle's opinion the poet is free to avail himself of the diction for which the elder Euclid condemned Homer, because it is at once clear and elevated. Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 10. 1. 28–29), on the other hand, though in partial agreement with Euclid, is of the opinion that the poet should be permitted to use the types of words in question because they render the task of composing verses less difficult, thereby condoning the very thing which Euclid condemned in Homer. Quintilian's words are these: "We should bear in mind, however, that poets are not to serve as models for orators in all respects—for instance in the freedom they enjoy in the choice of words and the license in the choice of figures. Poetry of all kinds has been compared to ceremonial oratory, and in addition its object is to give pleasure, which it does by inventing not only the untrue but sometimes even the incredible. Poets can also be justified on the ground that being bound by the requirements of a certain metre they cannot always use ordinary words, but driven from the straight road they must needs follow certain by-paths of expression, and are compelled not only to use one word in place of another, but to lengthen their words and to contract, transpose, and divide them." This might have served as still another refutation of Euclid....

18

The Chorus

[I.120] The chorus is a group of persons singing in unison. In tragedy the chorus is the dramatic representation of a homogeneous throng, composed of plebians or members of another class, which finds itself in the place where a tragic event is taking place. And just as the throng plays no part in the event unfolding before it except incidentally, so the chorus, by which it is represented, cannot become directly involved in the tragic action except in the same manner. Its proper role is that of singing choric odes in which it makes comments and passes judgments on what it has just seen and heard, in this reflecting actual groups of persons commenting and passing judgments on the actions of their lords that are unfolding before their eyes. It is true that as a constituent of the *dramatis personae* the chorus sometimes answers questions or reports what it deems to be relevant information about its lords and that, in doing so, it discharges an office like that of an actual person of high or low rank in like circumstances. When it does so, however, it cannot properly be called a chorus, for on those occasions it is an actor speaking, not a group singing, and it is as a singer of choric songs that it has rightly taken the name of chorus. What is more, its spoken utterances have for their subject particulars designed to advance the plot toward its conclusion, a fact that deprives them of the character of choric utterances even though they are delivered not by one person but by many. Finally, it seems impossible to deny that the chorus plays no direct role in the action when the subject of its odes is not particulars that serve to advance the plot and the singer is not one person but many, for then its judgments or comments are those of the group as a whole, and if the tragedy contained no such odes and no such chorus it would still have all the components necessary to carry the action forward to its conclusion.

Setting aside, then, the kind of chorus that serves to advance and complete the tragic action, a kind that cannot properly be given that name, I submit that the chorus properly so called has a suitable place in tragedy and not in the New Comedy (for I am not at the moment concerned with the Old). And the reason is obvious: it is that tragedy represents the actions of royal personages, and that these actions, especially when they are of an extraordinary nature, as those dealt with by tragedy, invariably attract the attention of the people, who having seen and heard proceed to make comments and pass judgments. Such actions inevitably become matters of public knowledge owing to the high station of royal personages, whose words and deeds are quickly reported everywhere. But the New Comedy can have no chorus; that is to say, it cannot represent a group of people commenting and passing judgment on the action, for its subject is the doings of obscure private citizens of low degree, and these will in all probability remain unknown until after they have happened, very often until many days after they have happened, and sometimes never become known at all.

In tragedy the chorus is introduced five times, for the people comment and pass judgment on the actions of the royal personages in question whenever these actions seem to be heading toward an end; in other words, the chorus is brought in to speak at the end of each part of the tragedy. These parts which are called acts, are five in number and, if we conceive of a tragedy as a body, may be said to be its members. Why tragedies or dramatic actions are divided into five parts or acts, neither more nor less, is a question to which we shall perhaps provide the correct answer elsewhere. For the present we will say no more than that the division was made, among other reasons, to enable the spectators to retain a rather long action in mind, and that the number decided upon was five because a long play or other composition is usually considered easiest to remember if it is divided into five parts. For nothing can be naturally divided into more than five principal parts, nature having given us five, and not more than five, fingers for each hand, and it is to the five fingers, as to their proper repositories, that we habitually assign the parts into which something has been divided.¹ Cicero understood this and consequently said that Hortensius composed his pleas on the fingers of his hand;² and it is perhaps to signify the recital of a story complete in all its parts that the Greeks used the word *πεμπάξειν*.³ Now, since the chorus represents the judgments and comments made by actual people on the whole or certain parts of an action involving its lords, and the morals of the people are generally good, especially in public, it follows that in its songs the chorus will praise virtuous deeds and condemn depravities and will pray to God that he may reward the good, punish the wicked, and grant mercy and comfort to the afflicted. On the other hand it will not be saddened by the sufferings of the wicked or by other similar matters that can be easily imagined.

* * * * *

[1.520] Aristotle has already discussed the chorus, considering it as a group of persons brought upon the stage to sing and to do no more than sing. He now (18. 56a 25-32) adds that it can also be introduced as a speaker⁴ and to speak as one involved in the action. But because in his discussion of the chorus as a group of singers Aristotle omitted to say what the matter of their songs should be, he now adds that choral songs contain matter of two kinds, either alien to the plot and unrelated to it or appropriate to it and part and parcel of the whole. And just as he disapproves of bringing the chorus upon the stage simply to speak but would have it also participate in the action, so he disapproves of the chorus' singing of things alien to the plot and unrelated to it, demanding that the matter of its songs be both suited to the plot and bound up with it. What Aristotle says, then, is that if the chorus is brought on the stage not to sing but to speak, it must cease being a chorus in the strict sense and "assume an actor's role," becoming a "part of the whole," that is, participating in the action. In other words its role must be like that played in the Trojan war by Aeneas, who claims (*Aen.* 2. 6) to have been "a great part" of it. Observe that Aristotle does not regard the chorus as participating in the

action when it is engaged in singing or in any other activity really proper to it. And surely the chorus as a body of singers cannot be said to be a participant in the action, for the action is no less intelligible if we ignore the chorus than if we take notice of it. This becomes clear if we consider the New Comedy, which makes no use of the chorus and yet has a plot indistinguishable in form from that of tragedy, where a chorus is introduced as needed to separate the five acts from one another. Further, if the choric odes represent, as we have said, the judgments of the people as a whole on a royal action as it unfolds in successive parts, it follows that a chorus is a *persona* outside the action and no part of it, since an action cannot be in the least altered by the comments made upon it by the people or by the chorus speaking as the people. But when the chorus is brought in to speak and act it is to be considered as one of the actors and as part of a whole, so that if it is removed that whole will cease to be what it had been. Therefore when the chorus enters to speak it should play a role that is peculiarly its own, as every other actor plays one that is peculiarly his. In Euripides the chorus is brought in to do no more than to speak, saying what any other *persona* might say who had only a speaking part in the action. In Sophocles, as is to be clearly seen in the spoken parts of the chorus in *Oedipus the King*, it is brought in to do more than speak, saying not what any other *persona* might say, but what is appropriate to itself as an agent involved in the action. Aristotle condemns the use of the chorus made by Euripides and praises that made by Sophocles. The reason is evident. The chorus must either sing, which is its proper and principal function, or speak in line with its peculiar interests in what is happening, which is its secondary function and not so peculiarly its own as the other. But it must never speak except when its interests are affected by what is being done, and must never serve as messenger or other such *persona*....

19

The Prologue

[1.141] Prologues are of three kinds. Those of the first are quite distinct from the rest of the play and, as far as we have been able to ascertain in our reading, are peculiar to Latin comedy, whose *personae* generally include a *Prologus* who is unrelated to all the others and who, having walked on stage to reveal the argument, retires and is not seen again. In Plautus the *Prologus* is usually a god; in Terence he is a man; in both he is peculiar in that he might also be called the poet's counselor or secretary or advocate. The *Prologus* was invented so that the audience might have some definite knowledge of the comedy before it was performed, for comedy represents people of low condition, and the story it tells has never come to anyone's knowledge either through

history or oral tradition. Hence the Latins never introduced a *Prologus* into their tragedies, for tragic actions tell of kings and gods and are consequently known to all and may be easily recognized by all as soon as the mere name of, say, Electra, Oedipus, or some other such personage is heard. For this reason Giovanni Battista Giraldi seems to have committed a grave offense against tragedy when he furnished his *Orbech* with a prologue, an offense, we may add, that cannot be pardoned except by accusing him of another and much graver, that of taking for his subject a story known neither to history nor to oral tradition, with royal personages never before heard of. The only possible defense for Giraldi's aberration is that offered for the prologue in comedies, that they represent the unknown stories of unknown persons; but, as we shall show in its proper place, the use of such stories in tragedy is unpardonable. If, however, the prologue may appropriately be used by comedy for the reason just stated, it cannot be used by those comedies which tell the familiar stories of famous characters. Hence we are justified in saying that Plautus should never have prefixed a prologue to his *Amphytrion*, where the action and the characters are very well known. But that comedy, or tragi-comedy, is marred by so many other faults that to call attention to one more will not lower it greatly in the world's esteem.

As I have already noted, the Roman poets invented the type of prologue peculiar to Latin comedy to set the argument before the audience and so to prepare it for understanding an action of which it knew nothing. The fact, however, that such arguments foreshadow future events and actions obliges us to believe that the person speaking the prologue is something of a prophet and the argument something of a prophecy, and that Plautus, who puts his prologues in the mouths of gods, is in this respect more commendable than Terence, who puts them in the mouths of men, for a mortal cannot know future events and foretell how they are to happen unless he is a prophet or a soothsayer. But if the prologue is spoken by some one who is neither of these, the action about to unfold is robbed of all verisimilitude, for by revealing its argument the speaker betrays his familiarity with it, and he can be familiar with it only if it has happened and is not about to happen for the first time.

The Roman poets invented the *Prologus*' role so that he might hold forth on the comedy by revealing its argument under one pretext or another. But they assigned to him the additional role of praising the poet and denouncing his enemies and of expressing many sentiments designed to promote their interests and undermine those of others, taking special pains to show that those sentiments were occasioned by the comedy and that thanks to that same comedy they could be expressed without impropriety. This practice originated with the narrative or epic poets, who, when speaking of themselves or telling a story in their own person, are in position to sing their own praises, to offer excuses for themselves, and even, when they have cause, to speak ill of others. This they do either at the beginning of their poems (Virgil, Statius) or at the end (Ovid, Statius).¹ But as Dante shows in the commentary to his canzone entitled *Contra gli erranti miei*,² writers in the vulgar tongue cannot appropriately sing their own praises, or offer excuses for themselves, or speak ill of others

anywhere but at the conclusion of their canzoni, and, as an indication that their subject is now different from that which filled the whole of each preceding stanza, they are obliged to restrict themselves to a half-stanza. In this half-stanza, Dante concludes, the poet should out of modesty address his words not to the reader but to the canzone itself so that the reader may not be offended by what he reads. This principle has not been strictly observed by the poets, Petrarch himself among them, who have spoken of themselves not only at the conclusion of their canzoni and in a half-stanza and addressing their words to the canzone itself in the manner perscribed by Dante but also at the beginning, sometimes filling an entire stanza and sometimes more than one, and addressing their words directly to the reader, without leaving the latter part of the poem void of such matter.³ Boccaccio too indulges in talk about himself at the beginning of his stories or in the middle or at the end.⁴ This practice has been adopted from the historians, who never refrain from discoursing about themselves in any part of a history if they believe that doing so will redound to their advantage. Now though the epic poet may enjoy the privilege of commending himself and his poem, I do not think it follows that he enjoys the additional privilege of bestowing on his hero praise over and above that implicit in the recital of his exploits, especially if he does so in the proem, as Virgil did when he wrote (*Aen.* 1. 6-7),

He brought his gods to Latium; from him sprang the Latin race,
The Alban fathers and the ramparts of lofty Rome.

Prologues of the second kind, unlike those of the New Comedy invented by the Romans, are not entirely unrelated to the action, yet are not as closely bound up with it as they should be. They are to be found in the tragedies of Euripides, who opens some of them with a speech by a god or a mortal telling of a few or many present or past occurrences so that the audience may fully understand the action that is about to follow, but more often than not, and in fact nearly always, with damaging effect on the probabilities; for what Euripides sets before the audience is a single person speaking at length of matters that would be better brought to mind at a more opportune time and place. It should be noted, however, that unlike the *Prologus* in Latin comedies, the one in Euripides never speaks of the poet himself, or of matters remote from and unrelated to the plot, or of future events that he cannot reasonably have any knowledge of.

Prologues of the third kind are those that are related to the plot, are a part, and a principal and necessary part, of the plot, and are organically connected with the rest of the play in the same manner as the head is connected by the nerves with the other members of the body. Aristotle defines this kind of prologue as the part of a tragedy that precedes the first entrance of the chorus. Its handling has been highly praised in the tragedies of Sophocles and the comedies of Aristophanes....

20

The Four Species of Tragedy

[1.506] Aristotle now (18. 55b 32-56a 3) divides all tragedies into four species.... Our author has already distinguished plots into two species, the simple and the complex (p. 114). He now distinguishes them into four and offers examples of each. We should observe that it is less than accurate for Aristotle to say that tragedies are distinguishable into four species, for the differences by which the species are so constituted proceed less from the tragedies than from the plots. We have seen that tragedy is divisible into six species, that is, into as many species as it has qualitative parts. We now see that thanks to these same qualitative parts tragedy is divisible also into four species: simple and complex tragedies and tragedies of character and of suffering. Aristotle has already distinguished plots into the simple and the complex. Complex plots, he has said, are those which contain a reversal from misery to happiness or from happiness to misery. He offered *Oedipus the King* as an especially good example of a complex plot but omitted to offer one of the simple. In this passage he makes new distinctions. What concerns him now, however, is not plots but tragedies, and he divides them into four instead of into two species. All plots, thanks to which tragedies are distinguishable into four species, are simple or complex, or plots of suffering or of character. A complex plot is not simply one that contains a reversal, but one in which the reversal occurs through a recognition. Aristotle here offers no example of this kind of plot, having previously designated *Oedipus* as one. A plot of suffering is one containing a reversal (though one that is not the result of a recognition) from happiness to misery. Examples of such plots are the *Ajax* and the *Ixion*.¹ Simple plots are of two kinds. There are those which begin and end in such misery and torment as are suffered by Prometheus on Mount Caucasus and by others in the nether world. Plots of this kind are of the fourth species, to which in this passage Aristotle does not give a name.² There are also those which begin and end in moderate unhappiness and which Aristotle calls plots of character. An example of this species is the *Peleus*.³

Now it would seem that just as complex plots in which the reversal occurs through a recognition may end happily or unhappily, the same should be true of complex plots that contain no recognition. A plot of the latter sort is the *Persians* of Aeschylus, in which the Athenians enjoy a transition from misery to happiness thanks to the flight of Xerxes. In like manner if we have simple plots that begin and end in suffering, we ought also to have simple plots that begin and end in happiness, as, for example, stories of the gods in their heavenly abodes or of the souls of the blest in the Elysian fields. Again, if we have plots of character in which the actions are moderately unhappy, we ought also to have plots of the same kind in which the actions are moderately happy, as, for example, one which tells the story of the nuptials of Peleus and Thetis. Hence we ought rightly to have eight and not four species of tragedy. But we must not let it pass unnoticed that Aristotle, who does not approve of plots with happy endings unless the endings result from recognitions, has made no mention of these additional species....

Part IV

Comedy

[1.126] Aristotle has already said (2. 48a 16-18) that comedy is an imitation of men worse than the average. He now (5. 49a 32-37) clarifies his meaning by adding that "worse" is not intended to mean worse in every respect but only in the sense that they have certain imperfections which are by nature ludicrous, such as stupidity and physical ugliness of a kind that gives no pain. It was in these respects that Homer's Margites was worse than ordinary men. To determine which imperfections make a person a fit object of imitation by comedy he reasons in the following manner.

Imperfections in human beings are simply forms of ugliness. The ugliness is of two kinds, of body and of soul. Each kind of ugliness is also of two kinds. Ugliness of soul proceeds from wickedness or stupidity; ugliness of body is either painful or harmful or neither painful nor harmful. The ugliness of soul that proceeds from stupidity moves men to laughter, and the same is true of the physical ugliness that is neither painful nor harmful, as proved by the fact that it is impossible to contain one's laughter in the presence of an ill-formed and ugly face which is not the cause of pain to its possessor. Since we are engaged in a search for the proper kind of ludicrous matter for comedy, we conclude from the preceding that the proper objects for comedy to imitate are stupid or ugly persons who are neither harmed nor pained by their stupidity or ugliness. So much may be gathered from Aristotle's words or, rather, from the tenor of his words, for he does not say all this explicitly. His words as we have them are mere notes jotted down as aids to his memory, and it is probable that he elaborated them in their proper place in another volume, for in his *Rhetoric*¹ he says that he discussed the ludicrous in his treatise on poetry. Yet even though the theory of the ludicrous was, as I imagine, fully discussed in that treatise, I am of the opinion that Cicero was unacquainted with the work, for if he had been he never would have said through an interlocutor in one of his dialogues that the books that he had seen on this subject were things to laugh at rather than sources of true doctrine. For Aristotle's doctrines are never laughable by reason of their stupidity; they astound us, rather, by reason of their penetrating sense.²

We shall now say a few words on the subject of the ludicrous, and we shall

do so for two reasons: to gain a clearer understanding of the doctrines which Aristotle has set forth so succinctly in one brief note, and to discover, it may be, principles of which he makes no mention. Laughter is provoked by pleasurable things apprehended by the senses or the imagination. These may be divided into four classes. (1) We are pleased to see, for the first time or after an absence, persons who are dear to us, or acquire or recover things which we value highly. The persons who are dear to us are our fathers, mothers, children, lovers, friends, and the like. Hence fathers and mothers embrace their children with laughter and rejoicing, and little children, on their part, run to their parents with joyous laughter. Lovers, too, embrace one another with laughter. The things that are dear to us are honors, public offices, jewels, possessions, good tidings—in short everything that becomes ours after we have desired it long or ardently. (2) Deceptions, as when a person is made to say, do, or suffer what he would not say, do, or suffer unless he were deceived. Such deceptions are a source of very great pleasure to us and move us to laughter. The cause of this laughter is the sin of our first parents, which so corrupted our nature that we take pleasure in the ills of others as we do in our own good fortune. And no human ills delight us more than those which proceed from the faculty peculiar to man, namely, the reason; for when others are deceived in our presence we assume that we are superior to them, and superior in the very faculty which makes man akin to God and sets him far above all other creatures. The truth of this will be clearly seen if we consider that one does not laugh or rejoice—at least immoderately—on seeing his neighbor constrained by force, necessity, or chance to say or do or suffer something against his will; for though in such circumstances a man may suffer injury or dishonor, he does not thereby give evidence of an impaired reason or understanding.

Deceptions which give rise to laughter are of four kinds. (a) Some men are deceived through their ignorance of things known to all men not wanting in common sense and through drunkenness, dreams, or delirium. (b) Others are deceived through their ignorance of the arts and sciences, or of the true measure of their own physical and intellectual powers, as when they boast of abilities which in fact they do not possess. (c) Still others are deceived when a thing or a saying is given an unexpected turn or when their own words are turned against them. (d) Some, finally, are deceived by the machinations of men or by chance.

Let us now enlarge somewhat upon these matters, giving examples to make our meaning clearer. (a) Ignorant and stupid men lacking common sense say, do, and suffer things which amuse us and move us to laughter, being deceived through their ignorance of what all men usually know. Such a man is Calandrino,³ who believes the fabulous tales of the country of Bengodi (8. 3) and who believes also that he is pregnant (9. 3), that a woman who is touched with a charm must follow him (9. 5), and that he has found the heliotrope, a stone of miraculous virtue (8. 3). Such a man is Ferondo (3. 8), who believes that he died, went to Purgatory, and returned to life. Such a man is master Simone, who believes that Bruno and Buffalmalco are pirates.⁴ Such a woman

is Alibech (3. 10), who believes that she is performing a service to God when she puts the devil back into Hell. Such a woman is Lisetta da ca' Quirino (4. 2) who lies with a friar, believing that she is lying with the Archangel Gabriel. Such a man, finally, is Homer's Margites, who was so stupid as not to know whether he was older or younger than his mother, or whether he had been borne by his mother or his father.⁵ Yet though the simplicity of such people excites our laughter, it is to be observed that it causes them no very great harm, otherwise it would either fail to excite our laughter or would moderate it considerably. This observation is implicitly made by Boccaccio (8. 7) when he says: "The ladies had laughed heartily at the unhappy Calandrino and would have laughed even more had it not saddened them to see him robbed of his capons by those who had stolen his pig." The reason is quite obvious; it is that such people are so grossly ignorant of the world and its ways that they are apt to be easily imposed upon, and men feel pity for those who are easily harmed and perhaps hatred or indignation against those who harm them. And the emotions of pity, hatred, and indignation extinguish every desire to laugh. (Aristotle prescribes this kind of deception as the proper matter of comedy; we must bear in mind, however, that he does not consider it proper matter for the New Comedy; for the New Comedy requires a plot which owes its comicality to deception of a quite different sort, of the sort, namely, that is due to the machinations of men or to chance and is equally appropriate to tragedy, though in tragedy the persons involved in the action are of a higher rank, and their good or bad fortune is of a different kind.) An example of deception due to drunkenness, delirium, or a dream, but yet provocative of laughter, is found in the story of Pinuccio (9. 6), who lay with Nicolosa. But if the dream, the drunkenness, or the delirium is made the means whereby one is enabled to do an injury to another it will lose the power to provoke laughter. Such is Pyrrhus' feigned dream, which enabled him to wrong Nicostratus; the drunkenness of which Arriguccio (7. 8) and Tofano (7. 4) were falsely accused by their wives to their grief; and the delirium which Lydia avers was suffered by Pyrrhus to Nicostratus' hurt (7. 9). In these situations the injury is so great that the deception is not comical.⁶

(b) We speak next of those who, through their ignorance of the arts and sciences and through a false estimate of their powers, are so self-deceived as to boast of knowledge and skills they do not in fact possess and who become the objects of other men's laughter when their boasts are exposed as vain. Of course ignorance of the arts and sciences and lack of the skills and powers necessary to accomplish some particular work are not in themselves ridiculous. What is ridiculous is the boastfulness we have just described and the consequent discovery by the boaster that he has been the victim of self-deception. For it is only those who in the practice of their craft or in a public disputation or in some other activity have been known to boast, openly or tacitly, of their mastery of the arts and sciences that become ridiculous when their knowledge has been put to the test and found wanting, and the cause of laughter in these situations is our recognition of the boaster as a victim of self-deception. Hence it is not to be wondered at that boasters of this kind refuse to be taught by

and to learn from others even though learning is a most delightful and useful thing; for one cannot learn without first confessing to one's ignorance, and a confession of ignorance on their part would imply the admission that their boasts had been unwarranted and would expose them to ridicule. And so such people remain ignorant, preferring ignorance to the knowledge which they could gain only by becoming the objects of others' scorn. In like manner it is not those who do not know how to do a thing well or are not able to do it at all that are ridiculous, but only those who first indulge in unwarranted boasts and then fail to carry them out. It is for this reason that defeated gamblers and litigants are ridiculous; for by engaging in games of chance or entering in lawsuits these people boast, at least tacitly, that they are the superiors, or at least the equals, of their opponents, and their defeat proves that they had beguiled themselves into false notions of their powers. Hence the counsel which Horace said (*Epist.* 1. 8-9) he frequently received:

Act wisely in time and unharness your aging horse
Lest in the end he is mocked for his stumbling and his broken
wind.

An example of a boastful gambler who becomes ridiculous in the eyes of another person is Bernabò of Genoa (2. 9), who is laughed at by Ambrogiuolo of Piacenza, after the latter had duped him into believing that he, Ambrogiuolo, had won the wager.

(c) Again, men are moved to laughter when they hear some one's words, however laudable in themselves, given an unexpected turn either by the author himself or by his adversary. The ways in which this may be done are many. Messer Ricciardo (2. 10), for example, asked of Chinzica, his wife, "Will you remain here in mortal sin?" Ricciardo's question is that of an admirable and saintly man, but his wife gave his words an unexpected turn with a play on words: "If I am now in mortal sin I will remain here even if I am in pestle sin."⁷ Buffalmacco (8. 9) begins an oath with the words, "I vow to the High God," and then adds, "of Passignano," thereby distinguishing between the true God and a fabulous one and so nullifying the oath. In like manner Bruno (8. 9) begins to show how great a thing it is to reveal the secrets of piracy with the words, "The secret that you desire to know is a very great one, and to tell it is a crime great enough to undo me, to banish me from the world, nay, to cast me into the jaws of Lucifer," then he adds, "of the Lucifer of St. Gall," thus distinguishing between the real Lucifer and one carved on a church door and reducing the magnitude of his secret to nothing.

Such are some of the ways in which words, however laudable in themselves, may be given an unexpected turn. Let us bear in mind, however, that we have not given examples of all the possible ways in which this might be done, for to do so would require a long treatise, especially if we should enumerate all possible figurative expressions resulting from the use of words of more than one sense. This, obviously, is not the place for such a treatise, and so we refrain from offering an exhaustive list, confident that the reader who meets such

figures will not fail to recognize and understand them.

By these same ways one may inflict on an adversary the very wound his words were designed to inflict on oneself. So when a knight said to the minstrel Saladin, "Wash your mouth, and not your hands," Saladin replied, availing himself of his adversary's metaphor, "Sir I have not spoken of you today."⁸ So, again, when the Bishop of Florence (6. 3) presented the Marshall of King Robert's armies to Monna Nonna de' Pulci, and asked her, "Nonna, what do you think of him? Do you believe you could win him?" she replied, carrying out the metaphor from gambling and thus inflicting a wound on both the Bishop and the Marshall, "Sir, I doubt that he could win me, but in any case I should want the money to be good."⁹ Now what makes words of this kind provoke laughter is simply the deception resulting from giving the words spoken a meaning different from or contrary to the intended one, a deception unforeseen by the speaker, who may have intended them as a compliment, by any present who may have heard them, and by the author of the cruel retort.

(d) Deceptions resulting from the studiously laid schemes of men are comical provided that the victim is not made to suffer a very great injury. An example of this may be found in the very amusing episode (9. 6) in which Calandrino is surprised by his wife, who had been informed of her husband's doings by his friends, and in the other (8. 4) in which the Provost of Fiesole is caught in bed with Ciutazza by his bishop and many others through the machinations of a widow. In the same way deceptions resulting from the schemings not of men but of chance are also comical, provided, again, that the victim does not suffer too severely. Examples may be found in the story of Caterina and Ricciardo (5. 4), whom Lizio, Caterina's father, surprises sleeping naked in each other's arms, and in the story of Ercolano's wife (5. 10), whose paramour is accidentally found hiding under a chest by her husband.

Now the two types of deception just considered are ludicrous and may make good subjects for the New Comedy; they are, in fact, better subjects than deceptions resulting from stupidity or physical ugliness, which seem to be especially commended by Aristotle as fit subjects for comedy. But if the deceptions, whether the work of chance or of men, cause great suffering to the victim, they are not comic, for then our compassion or humanity proves stronger than any pleasure we may feel at the discomfiture of a fellow man. For example, there is nothing comical in the episode in which Ghismonda and Guiscardo (4. 1) are accidentally caught dallying by Tancredi, or in the other in which Friar Alberto (4. 2) is caught lying with Lisetta through a plot laid by her kinsmen. Deceptions of this kind, which bring great suffering upon the victim, may in fact be fit matter for tragedy. Clytaemnestra, for instance, is the victim of plots laid by Orestes and Electra; and Oedipus is deceived by chance into slaying his father and marrying his mother, discovering later that he has been guilty of both crimes.

(3) The third class of things that give us pleasure and provoke our laughter consists of wickedness of soul and physical deformities, together with the actions of which they are the cause. But we laugh at them only when they appear to us under the guise of other things, for then we may pretend that not

they but these other things are the real causes of our laughter. For, as we have already said, our nature has been so corrupted by the sin transmitted to us by our first parents that we take pleasure in the defects of our fellow men either because the knowledge that many others are also imperfect offers us assurance that we are not as imperfect as we believed, or because the recognition in others of defects of which we are free enhances our self-esteem and fills us with pride and joy. It must be borne in mind, however, that we laugh only when the defects in question appear to us so disguised that we could convincingly attribute our laughter to some other cause, for no one wishes to be known as taking pleasure, however great it may in fact be, in the wickedness or deformity of others, God having vouchsafed us the light to recognize such pleasure as opprobrious.

Let us now consider a few examples. When Ermino de' Grimaldi (1. 8) invited Guglielmo Borsiere to describe for him something never before seen so that he might have painted on his walls, Borsiere replies that one thing Ermino had never seen was liberality. The reply may be interpreted in two ways: that Ermino had never seen liberality, which is in fact invisible, and that he had all his life been avaricious and liberality had never been his virtue. Again, Michele Scalza (6. 6) makes the ugliness of the Baronci family the basis of a demonstration that they are the noblest family in the world. This ugliness is not brought to our notice for the express purpose of ridiculing the Baronci but is given the appearance of an element in the demonstration, which runs as follows: When children first try their hand at painting they produce ugly figures, but once they attain a certain proficiency their figures are well formed. In like manner, the features of the Baronci are so ill formed that God could not have been a master of the painter's art when He made them; the well-proportioned faces of other men He must have made later, when He had acquired mastery of that art. Hence the Baronci are of more ancient lineage and therefore nobler than the rest of mankind. We laugh openly at this because the argument enables us to explain that we are amused not by the ugliness of our neighbors but by the ingenuity of the demonstration, though in reality we laugh at the ugliness.

(4) The fourth and last class of pleasurable things that move us to laughter consists of all the things having to do with carnal pleasure, like the privy parts, sexual intercourse, and the memories and representations of both. It is to be borne in mind, however, that these things do not provoke our laughter when we see them or are told about them in the presence of others; on such occasions they fill us with shame, rather, and cause us to blush, especially if we are or may be the sort of persons who may be suspected by those present of taking pleasure in them, desiring to have the active or passive experience of them. For if we failed to blush or spoke no word or made no gesture to indicate that such things are not to our liking, it would be presumed that acts of unchastity had our approval and that we desired to indulge in them ourselves, for nature inclines us to an unbridled indulgence in carnal pleasures. Thus we read in Boccaccio (9. 3) that when Calandrino was made to believe that he was pregnant, he turned to his wife and said, "Ah me, Tessa, it is

you who have brought me to this, for you will always be uppermost. I have often warned you.' When she heard her husband's complaint Tessa, who was a woman of great modesty, blushed with shame and hanging her head left the room without a word." Similarly when a lady (2. 8) one day "called the servant Giannetta to her and very civilly and as if in jest asked her if she had a lover, Giannetta turning red replied, 'Madam, a poor girl like me who has been banished from her home and lives a domestic in another's household must not take thought of love, and it would be unseemly for her to do so.' " When described to us in the presence of others, situations of this sort will please us and move us to laughter only if hidden under a veil that will make it possible to pretend that we laugh at something other than their lewdness. (This is manifest to all, and there is no need to offer examples.) The bare lewd fact itself or the bare description of it, on the other hand, will move us to laughter if it is seen or heard in a place where we are unobserved by others....

Part V

Epic Poetry

[2.107] Aristotle's discussion of tragedy contains many observations that are also valid for epic poetry. He therefore opens his discussion of epic poetry (1) by identifying the features which tragedy and epic poetry have in common. But since the use that epic poetry makes of them differs from that made of them by tragedy, (2) he next describes the nature of these differences and their causes. Then, since epic poetry has features peculiar to itself and not found in tragedy, (3) he shows what they are and describes the qualities that make them good of their kind. Finally, (4) he describes the faults which both epic poetry and tragedy must guard against and offers instructions on how each may make some of these faults tolerable. This discussion, then, may reasonably be divided into four parts.

I

How Epic Poetry Resembles Tragedy

[2.107] Aristotle begins by asserting that epic poetry resembles tragedy in that they both have the same four qualitative parts (plot, character, thought, language) and in that epic poems like tragedies are of four species (simple, complex, epics of character, and epics of suffering).

1a

Epic Poems are Unified and Complete Wholes

[2.107] Aristotle will explain in later pages (p. 239) that epic and tragic plots are not alike in every respect, that tragic plots, for one thing, are more restricted both in time and in space, for they can neither extend beyond the twelve hours

during which the sun runs its course over our hemisphere nor represent actions unfolding elsewhere than on the stage. The thing he has chosen to consider at this point (23. 5a 17-24) is the one in which they most resemble each other, which is that their plots possess unity and are complete wholes. And he dwells on this one similarity to the neglect of the others (as, for instance, that both plots must recount the actions of gods or royal personages) because it might easily escape one's notice that an epic plot should possess unity; for historical narratives, which stand in relation to epic poems as the thing represented to the representation, generally contain a number of unrelated actions which occurred at different times and in different places and which consequently cannot combine to form a single action, and many poets had composed epic poems containing a plurality of actions of different kinds. It might also have escaped our notice that an epic poem should be a complete whole, i.e., that it should be of a suitably moderate length, for some poets, again, had not guarded against composing epic poems of a length both unsuitable and immoderate. To the authority of these poets Aristotle opposes certain theories advanced earlier in the *Poetics* and the example of Homer. Homer, he points out, chose to treat not a whole action but a part of one, for the whole history of the Trojan war would have been unsuitably long as the plot of his *Iliad*. Aristotle also takes pains to point out that like tragedies epic poems are of four species: simple, complex, epics of character, and epics of suffering. He proves this by again appealing to the example of Homer, for seeing that other poets did not make use of all four species or at least that they failed to make appropriate use of them (as Homer had made appropriate use of thought and language) one might have erroneously concluded that some or all four were peculiar to tragedy....

* * * * *

[2.109] If the contemplation of animals is to give us its natural and appropriate pleasure, we must contemplate not more than a single animal at a time and that one must have neither more nor less than all its members, which must be in their proper positions and suitably proportioned to one another.¹ But that pleasure will not be ours if we are made to contemplate not one but a number of animals bound together by a rope or a chain, or a single animal lacking its head or other member, or with head or other member disproportionately large or small, or with head or other member out of its proper position—with the head, for instance, where the breast should be. On the other hand we can derive one kind of pleasure from a number of animals set before us together and a different kind from a single animal with more or fewer than the natural number of members, or with members that are too large or too small in relation to the rest or not in their proper positions; for we feel one kind of pleasure in seeing one thing and another in seeing a number of them, and one kind of pleasure in seeing a monstrous or deformed thing and another in seeing one that is natural and well formed. In like manner if we would experience the peculiar pleasure that a single plot can naturally offer, we must

seek one that is composed of neither more nor fewer than the natural number of parts, each of which is proportionate to every other and in its proper position, otherwise our pleasure will be of the kind given by more than one plot or by one whose parts come to more or fewer than the requisite number or are in some way transposed or not duly proportioned to one another.

The animal simile we have been using has shown that the contemplation of an animal gives pleasure if these five conditions especially are met: the object of our contemplation must be one and not more than one; it must not have more than its proper number of members; it must not have fewer than its proper number of members; its members must be proportionate to one another; they must be in their right positions. Each of these conditions is a source of the peculiar and natural pleasure we take in contemplating an animal. Yet Aristotle specifies only one of these sources, the animal's being one and not two or more, his object being to show that a poem will not give the pleasure it is peculiarly and naturally fitted to give if it contains more than one plot. The reader will remember that this is not the first time Aristotle has drawn an analogy between a plot and an animal. He did so once before (7. 50b 34–36), though his purpose at that time was to show not, as he does here, that a poem should contain only one plot, but that a plot, like an animal, should have neither more nor fewer than its requisite number of parts, all of them in their right positions, and should be of a moderate magnitude. In a previous passage (8. 51a 16ff.), he also pointed out that every plot should be a single plot, not proving his point, however, by comparing a plot with an animal, or warning the poet against following the example of the historians, whose histories contain more than one action. In this passage, then, Aristotle has introduced two new points. I will not here repeat what I have already said, namely, that a tragedy or a comedy should contain not one plot but two and that whereas tragic and comic poets have been constrained by circumstances to limiting themselves to the single plot, the epic poet's limiting of himself to one plot was determined not by circumstances or by the example of the tragic and comic poets but by his love of glory and the desire to offer proof of the singular excellence of his genius. I will only say that the analogy here offered us is an unsuitable one, for since animals are works of nature, their members cannot be increased or decreased in number, nor can they be lengthened, shortened, or transposed, as can the parts of an action from which a poet constitutes a plot. Aristotle himself admits (23.59a 30ff.) that the parts of an action may be reduced in number by pointing to Homer's handling of the Trojan war and that a single action may supply materials for a number of plots by pointing to the *Little Iliad*, which though it contained a single action could yet supply materials for ten plots. It is also possible to transpose the parts of an action and to lengthen some and shorten others according to the pleasure of the epic poet. Nor is the epic poet debarred from inventing episodes that will serve to bind a variety of actions together and thus to give several actions the appearance of unity—to make of them, so to speak, a single body, something that cannot be done with two or more animals. But since plurality and diversity enhance the effect of pleasurable things above that produced by singleness

and uniformity, there can be no question that a number of different animals will give more pleasure than any one of them and that more pleasure will be derived from a plot containing a number of different actions than from another containing only one. On the other hand if a single action that is such by nature or has been made such by a poet's handling of it contains a variety of interdependent incidents which are neither fewer in number nor less novel than those found in actions whose plurality and diversity have not been reduced to unity and uniformity, it is not to be doubted that it will give greater pleasure than these others and deserves to be assigned to a higher rank, for plots of that kind are more rarely met with and, for that reason, are to be more highly esteemed. In like manner an animal possessing all the beauties found singly in a variety of other animals is to be judged the most beautiful of all, just as if the Helen that Zeuxis painted in Croton (Cicero, *De Inv.* 2. 1-3) had been a woman of flesh and blood she would have won greater praise than the five damsels of whom she was the composite portrait, and the eye of a judicious beholder would have taken the greater pleasure in the contemplation of her beauty. Therefore when he undertook to show that a plot should contain a single action, Aristotle should not simply have compared the plot to a single animal, for we may derive more pleasure from a number of animals than from one. He should, rather, have compared it to an animal possessing all the beauties found singly in many others, saying that a plot with a single action but possessing as many pleasure-giving features as are to be found in one with many actions will give more pleasure than plots of this second type and is to be ranked above them; and he should then have gone on to show how such a plot is to be constructed....

* * * * *

[2.112] Having said that plots should contain a single complete action, Aristotle now adds (23. 59a 21-24) that they "must not be like histories as commonly written,"² which for the most part relate more than a single action. His doctrine might be worded thus: "It has become customary for historians to relate a number of different actions and to set them before their readers as the single history of a single action. Though epic poetry is and ought to be similar to history, yet it must not follow the example of history in this respect, for history so written is not to be approved and cannot reasonably be defended, its only justification being that it has been the only kind witlessly produced by most historians." From this we may gather that Aristotle is here conveying two ideas. The first is that the plot must be like a history. We gather this to be his meaning from his remark that the plot must not be like what commonly passes for history, i.e., the sort of history that merits only condemnation, the implication being that it must be like the sort of history that can be rightly praised. The other is that a history which brings together a number of unrelated actions does not merit approval but is tolerated because it enjoys the sanction of custom and because most histories are so composed.

* * * * *

[2.113] Aristotle's assertion (23. 59a 22-23) that histories "do not relate a single action but [that] of one period of time" has been interpreted by some to mean that epic poetry differs from history in that an epic poem relates a single action whereas a history relates one or more, depending on the number of events that took place within a given time, and that what is commendable in history is to be condemned in epic poetry.³ But what Aristotle really means is, as we have already pointed out, that an epic poem must represent a single action and must not follow the example commonly found in history, which brings together a number of unrelated actions and sets them before the reader as a single action with time as its unifying principle, its intention being to relate all that happened within a given time span. Aristotle's reason for citing this practice is not to imply that a history may legitimately and comendably bring together all the events that took place within a given period of time or that the single period of time is the only unifying principle met in histories, for as we have already shown other means than time can be enlisted to unify a number of actions in such a way that the many will be given the appearance of unity. The first and most commendable is the interdependence of the various actions. Another is the single time span, which Aristotle has branded as unworthy of much praise, bringing it to our attention as an example of what is to be avoided. Still another, and no more praiseworthy than this last, is the grouping of a number of provinces in which the events related have occurred, and the same use can be made of seignories and religions. There is, finally, the no less blameworthy device of the single person, an example of which is to be found in the *Herculeid* of Panyasis, who may be the very poet Aristotle had in mind when he condemned those who had composed epic poems that told the lives of Hercules or Theseus and to whom he may be referring a second time in the words, "Others recount all that happened to one person" (23. 59a 37). I will not enumerate all the other means that have been or could be employed to achieve unity. Those I have cited will suffice to show that the one singled out for mention by Aristotle is to be shunned together with all the others except that of interdependence. We may conclude, therefore, that history as commonly written need not, as epic poetry must, restrict itself to a single action. Its subject may be a given period of time or else a single action which may be long, short, or of moderate length, or a number of actions which may or may not be interdependent, may have occurred in one place or in more than one, and may have been performed by one or more than one person....

* * * * *

[2.114] Aristotle now imagines a reader raising the following question: "I agree that it would be inappropriate for epic poets to take as their subject a single period of time, i.e., to represent the actions of one or more persons within a single time span, for if a number of things happen simultaneously they are

not likely to be interdependent, since simultaneity would seem to exclude logical sequence. Why, however, should they not be permitted to relate events that occurred to one or more persons in successive periods, when such events would in all probability be interdependent?" To which he replies (23. 59a 24-29) that interdependence can no more be predicated of events that followed one another in time than of those that occurred simultaneously. To be sure interdependent events commonly follow one another in time, but this does not mean that all events that occur in a time sequence are interdependent. To grasp the full significance of Aristotle's words I would point out that what Aristotle terms "probable or necessary dependence" is to be taken in two different senses, according as the events occur (1) simultaneously or (2) successively. (1) If they occur simultaneously they cannot be interdependent in the sense that one occurs earlier and one later and consequently that the former constitutes the cause or the beginning of which the latter is the effect or the end. Such events can be considered interdependent only thanks to an end that is neither of the two events. Thus Briseis complains in Ovid (*Heroides* 3. 47ff.) that she suffered a number of calamities at the same time, namely the death by the sword of her husband and her three brothers. The deaths of the one and of the three were not interdependent in the sense that any one of them was the cause or the beginning or the effect or end of any other; their interdependence consisted, rather, in their being jointly the cause and the beginning of Briseis' desolation, which was thus an effect and an end, a third thing, distinct from the deaths that she bewailed. This kind of dependence on an end generally owes its being, as we have said, to events that occur simultaneously; and I say generally and not invariably because certain events can be the beginning and the end, the cause and the effect of each other even though they occur simultaneously. (An example is the simultaneous deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices, each of whom died by the other's hand.) And it is the interdependence of things that, though unrelated, nevertheless work together to bring forth a third thing which Aristotle has in mind⁴ when he says (23. 59a 24-29), "The sea-battle off Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily, [which were] not directed to the same end...." (2) On the other hand, if events occur successively, i.e., if one occurs earlier and the other later in a single time sequence, a situation that makes it possible for the earlier event to be the cause or beginning of the later, which is thus its effect or end, their interdependence may be that of cause and effect and beginning and end, but it does not assure, as Aristotle observes, that the events "converge toward a common end." Two consecutive events, however, may be related to one another not only in the manner just described, but also in being jointly the cause or the beginning of a third event that is its effect or end: or they may lack the interdependence that seems to be peculiarly theirs, having only that which makes them the joint cause or beginning of a third event that is their effect or end. Aristotle fails to mention both kinds of interdependence found in events that succeed one another in time and also the relationship of cause and effect and of beginning and ending sometimes found in events that occur simultaneously. These omissions may be due to the fact that the types of in-

terdependence in question are easily identifiable or to that other fact which we have often had occasion to mention, that the *Poetics* does not contain all the components of a complete art of poetry....

* * * * *

[2.118] Custom sanctions the treatment by history of three types of narratives that must be eschewed by epic poetry. The first consists of events that occurred simultaneously and that not only are not interdependent but do not even converge toward a common end; the second of events that follow one another in a single period of time but do not depend on one another and do not converge toward a common end; the third of events that occurred simultaneously or successively and converge toward a common end or are interdependent to the extent that they may be said to form a single action, though that action is nevertheless excessively long. Most poets err in treating narratives of the first two types, and among them are those who composed a *Herculeid*, as did Panyasis, whose poem is mentioned by Hyginus (*Astronomica* 2. 6) and the commentator on Aratus translated by Germanicus⁵, and those who composed a *Theseid*. Poems of these types have already been condemned by Aristotle; yet we know from Juvenal (*Sat.* 1. 2) that despite Aristotle's admonition Codrus later composed a *Theseid*, just as Giovanni Battista Giraldi has composed an *Hercolea*, i.e., a life of Hercules, in *ottava rima*.⁶ Poets also err in dealing with narratives of the third type, and among these is the poet who composed the *Cypria* and the *Little Iliad*. Homer avoided narratives of all three types. That he avoided stories of the first two we learned on an earlier page, where having praised Homer as superior in all respects to all other poets Aristotle praises him also for having understood "either by art or by nature" the correct narrative procedure in composing the *Odyssey*, choosing only those incidents in Ulysses' life that together would form one and not more than one action. That he avoided stories of the third type we learn from the passage under consideration, where we are told (23. 59a 30ff.) that though his subject was a single action, viz. the Trojan war, yet in the *Iliad* he dealt not with the whole war, for that would have resulted in an excessively long poem, but only with that part of it that would make a poem of a suitable length....

* * * * *

[2.120] In an earlier passage (851a 22-30) Aristotle said, as a way of reproving poets who, like the authors of a *Herculeid* or a *Theseid*, had included a number of disparate actions in a single plot, that Homer had composed the plot of each of his two epics of only one action, and that each of those actions had a beginning, a middle, and an end. He now says (23. 59a 31-32) that the action of which the plot of the *Iliad* is made has only a middle, for the Trojan war was a complete action with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and Homer deals only with the incidents that constitute its middle.⁷ How are we to reconcile these two apparently contradictory statements? We may do so by noting

that beginning, middle, and end may be considered first in a large whole, and then in some part of it, as if that part were another, though lesser, whole. We may say, for example, that the head is the beginning of the human body, the trunk its middle, and the legs its end. On the other hand, taking the head as a separate whole, we may say that its beginning extends from the top to the forehead, its middle from the forehead to the mouth, and its end from the mouth to the chin. Thus though the Trojan war, which lasted ten years, has a beginning, a middle, and an end, one part of it, the story of Achilles' wrath, is also found to consist of those three parts, and both the story of the whole war and the story of Achilles' wrath may be held to be complete actions. We may conclude, therefore, that by saying that Homer treated a part of the Trojan war, which he says, has a beginning, a middle, and an end, Aristotle does not contradict the earlier statement just referred to, for he considers that part to be a complete action likewise having a beginning, a middle, and an end.

At this point the question might be asked whether the title given to these parts of a larger action should be of a kind to declare their dependence upon that action or their independence from it, declaring, rather, that the story told has its own beginning. The *Odyssey* relates the return of Ulysses from Calypso's island to Ithaca. This return is one part of a whole action, namely the return of Ulysses from Troy to Ithaca, which in turn is a part of the Trojan war, for the Trojan war cannot be said to have come to an end until the victorious Greek hosts had returned to their several homelands and had been disbanded. Yet no one calls or will ever call the return of Ulysses from Calypso's island to Ithaca anything but an action of Ulysses, so that the separate parts of the complete action of the Trojan war are to be considered not as parts of that war but as the actions of individual warriors. Hence we may rightly bestow our praise upon Statius for having recognized in the proem to his *Achilleis*⁸ that in the *Iliad* Homer had sung an action of Achilles and not a part of the Trojan war, and at the same time withhold it from Horace for having taken that poem as the story of the whole war.⁹ Now though Statius seems to have recognized that the action of the *Iliad* is a single action of Achilles as a participant in the Trojan war, he nevertheless failed to recognize Homer's wisdom in limiting himself to that single action and thought it best to make his *Achilleis* the story of *all* of Achilles' actions as a participant in that war, failing to notice the counsel implicit in Homer's example and to read in the *Poetics* the passage now under consideration. The same failures may be imputed to critics, both ancient and modern—and they are not few nor of small fame—who hold with Horace that Homer sang the whole of the Trojan war, taking its opening episode from one of its incidents and subsequently introducing others that occurred at its beginning and its end. How gravely these men have erred it would be impossible to estimate. How, we might well ask them, can they maintain that the *Iliad* tells the complete story of the Trojan war when it cannot yield matter for more than one or at most two tragedies, whereas the *Little Iliad* contains enough for more than eight? (The titles of these tragedies are listed by Aristotle [23. 59b 5-7], and they show with the utmost clarity which parts of the war Homer excluded from his *Iliad*.) And if it

were true that Homer had utilized all the matter of the Trojan war, though he chose not to arrange it in its chronological order, for what reason should other poets have chosen to make poems out of the events that preceded or followed the wrath of Achilles but that Homer had excluded them from his *Iliad*? What Homer did was to take a part of that war, separate it from the rest, and make of it a plot that contains that part as a complete action with a beginning, a middle, and an end and is known as the story of Achilles' wrath. Homer's poem represents not a part of the Trojan war nor an action involving both Greeks and Trojans, but an action growing out of the wrath of Achilles, and his choice of subject is to be accounted for by his desire to make his poem more marvelous than it might otherwise have been, for we find a truly marvelous action of a single person more marvelous than an equally marvelous action of a number of persons. In like manner, Homer took one part of Ulysses' return from Troy to Ithaca and fashioned it into a plot containing an action with a beginning, a middle, and an end. This return was a part of the Trojan war, but a single sequence of events within that return was fashioned into a distinct action that, as its name declares, is entirely Ulysses' action, and for the reason already given, to make it more marvelous by making it the story of a single person.

* * * * *

[2.123] Aristotle has already said that just as the bodily eye cannot take in at a glance the whole of an animal of immense size, so the memory cannot embrace the whole of a narrative of immense length. He now (23. 59a 33-34) repeats this as the reason why Homer chose not to bring the whole of the Trojan war together into a single plot, saying that the war was too great a thing to be easily seen in its entirety at one glance. (It will be noticed that Aristotle is here silent on the powers of the memory and conveys his meaning by means of the metaphor of the eye and its object.) This reasoning we have already refuted. We have shown that the difficulties which arise from the limitations of the memory can be surmounted in many ways, and that the poet who would banish long plots from poetry must find his justification elsewhere. Thus Homer's reasoning was not Aristotle's when he chose not to utilize a great many parts of the Trojan war and to fashion a plot out of only one, the wrath of Achilles. Yet despite the fact that this is the action of one person and extends over only a few days, it is so masterfully and memorably told that it fills many books and holds the reader with great wonder and delight. The reason, then, why Homer did not choose to work the whole history of the ten-years' war into a single plot is that no one would have thought it wonderful that such a plot should have proved marvelous and delightful; for that history contains so great a variety of unusual incidents extending over a great period of time and—which is even more important—involving the whole of Europe and the whole of Asia that the poem would have produced its effect by its matter alone and not by the labor that went into the poet's treatment of it. What he preferred to do was to choose a single action of one person and of only a few days' duration, an action which, being no more than an outburst

of wrath, could not at first sight have seemed of a kind to offer the poet opportunities for inventing particulars novel enough to form a plot marvelous and delightful in the highest degree and numerous enough to make it of a suitable length. If, on the other hand, Homer had chosen to sing the whole Trojan war and had sung it in the manner in which he sings this one part, which is a most commendable manner and worthy of his superhuman genius, he either would have succumbed to fatigue before completing it or would have found his life too short for a work of such extraordinary length. Then, too, since a superfluity of even excellent things not only lessens our appreciation of them but sometimes fills us with the displeasure that attends satiety, his readers would have prized his poem less than the present one. And, as we have suggested, there might have been those who would have judged that whatever in the poem was marvelous and delightful was due to the matter furnished by so famous a war and not to Homer's unique treatment of it. These, then, are the considerations which persuaded Homer not to sing the whole of the Trojan war as he sang the wrath of Achilles. The reason adduced by Aristotle, that a story of such length could not have been comprehended by the memory, cannot account for his choice.

If, on the other hand, Homer had chosen to work the whole of the Trojan war into a single plot and had handled it otherwise than he did the wrath of Achilles, i.e., by treating its every part as briefly as possible, he would not have been hailed, as he is now, the prince of poets, for the poem would have lacked the merits that have always made and continue and will always continue to make him worthy of that title: for one thing, the unduly condensed matter could never have been made to show forth its true and appropriate magnificence; for another—and this is far more important—matter so handled would not have made a poem, for, as we have already shown, a series of royal actions treated in summary form under various heads constitutes a history, and a story told in the manner of a history cannot be called a poem since the writer has not sustained the labor peculiar to the poet, which is that of invention, and consequently is entitled to none of the poet's glory. For this reason we ought perhaps to withhold our praise from the writers who composed the *Little Iliad* and the *Cypria*. It was probably these considerations, which establish the superior possibilities of a story of moderate to one of immense length, that restrained Homer from telling the whole story of the Trojan war, never giving a thought to what is here Aristotle's contention that the story of the whole war would have been too complicated from the excessive variety of its elements, for the greater that variety the more interesting the poem or the history....

* * * * *

[2.125] By saying (23. 59a 35) that Homer chose to treat "one part" of the Trojan war, Aristotle establishes the principle that the plot must not be so long that it cannot be comprehended by the mind and retained by the memory, and he implies that the part in question is neither from the beginning or the

end of the Trojan war but is its middle or a part of that middle. At this point some one might have objected that Homer was perhaps not very wise to treat only one part of the Trojan war, for to be delightful a plot must not only be brief but must also have the rich variety which is not commonly found in a single part of any action. To this Aristotle replies that though the part that Homer selected for treatment lacks the variety requisite to a most excellent and delightful plot, the fact remains that he filled and adorned his plot with a great variety of adventitious matter from the beginning and the end of the war and from occurrences that took place before or after the principal action and elsewhere than in the Troad. As a result the plot of the *Iliad* is neither taxing to the memory for being too long nor less than pleasing for lack of variety.

* * * * *

[2.126] Aristotle now (23. 59a 35-37) asserts that though Homer did not undertake to tell the beginning and the end of the war, he nevertheless found occasion to introduce many incidents from both, either to give his poem the variety that would render it more delightful or to shed light on those parts of it that sometimes cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of what preceded or succeeded them. Thus it was to give his poem both variety and intelligibility that Homer brought into it adventitious matter from the same action and from other actions as well. We say this despite the fact that Aristotle's words, "He lends his poem variety," would seem to indicate that variety was Homer's sole aim. These words of Aristotle's may also serve to enlist his authority against those who, seeing that Homer sometimes draws upon the beginning or the end of the war for incident, maintain that his subject is the whole of the Trojan war told in an order which, though not chronological, is yet a suitable one for poetry. Aristotle clearly asserts that these incidents from the Trojan war and others from other actions were introduced by the poet to embellish his poem and to lend it variety and not as members of its main body, as is the wrath of Achilles or that part of the war which coincides with the duration of Achilles' wrath. This assertion of Aristotle's is unexceptionable. If it were not, the subject of the *Iliad* would be not only the Trojan war but the many other actions upon which Homer draws for the same reason that he draws upon the beginning and the end of that war.

* * * * *

[2.127] As an example of an incident brought into the *Iliad* from the beginning or the end of the war to lend the poem beauty and variety, Aristotle cites (23. 59a 36) the catalogue of ships in the second book. This catalogue, therefore, is something connected with the beginning of the war and is not part of the action that Homer undertook to tell. Some, perhaps, may be unable to see why it is part of the beginning of the story and not of the action in which it appears. To these we offer the following explanation. Some incidents are so

completely of one part of a poem that they cannot be said to be of any other, yet the poet will find occasion to relate them or to have them related by one of his characters along with some episodes of which they are not an integral part. Thus, to go no farther afield than the catalogue of ships, neither the death of Protesilaus (*Il.* 2. 695ff.) nor the abandonment of Philoctetes in Lemnos (*Il.* 2. 716ff.) is part of the action which Homer undertook to tell. Both incidents are part of the beginning of the war, yet the poet finds occasion to introduce them into the main action of the *Iliad* when he comes to tell of their followers who fought under other leaders. The wanderings of Ulysses before his departure from Calypso's island do not belong in that part of Ulysses' homeward voyage which constitutes the subject of the *Odyssey*. They constitute, rather, a part of the beginning of that story, yet the poet represents Ulysses as reciting them (*Od.* 9-12) at the proper time and place before Alcinous.

There are still other incidents which probably—we cannot be certain—form no part of the main action, yet are told as such. We have already given an example of one in the *Iliad* (3. 161ff.), where Helen is represented on a tower identifying as for the first time the captains of the Greek host for Priam's benefit. This episode cannot be accepted as part of the main action unless we deem it highly probable that in the nine years during which the war had raged around his city Priam, who had frequently negotiated with the enemy during more than one truce, had never learned who any of them were, or that these same captains could not have been identified for him earlier from the same tower or another by Helen or some other person who also knew them.

There are also incidents that are thought of as among the constituents of a certain part of the story because they happen there for the first time; nevertheless, because they happen a second time in another part, they can also be thought of as among the constituents of that second part and may be recounted there along with the other incidents that constitute it. Since, however, they first appeared in an earlier part and their second appearance coincides in every detail with their first, they are said to be properly of that first part, and if recounted in the second part may be said to have been transposed from the one part to the other. Homer's catalogue of ships is a case in point. At the beginning of the war, when the Greek host gathered at Aulis, a muster was made of the leaders, the ships, and the nations that composed it. A second muster is made in the part of the war which Homer made his subject. If, however, his subject had been the whole war, he would doubtless have given us this painstaking and interesting catalogue early in the poem, where he would have described the first muster, and when he came to describe the second he either would not have repeated it or would have disposed of it in a few words. Hence we may reasonably say that Homer told in the middle of the story an episode that rightly belongs at the beginning, and that his account of it would have been briefer if he had taken the whole war for his subject. Of these three procedures the first and third are laudable; the second is tolerable because it has been followed by many poets rather than because it may be rationally justified....

* * * * *

[2.129] Aristotle has shown that some epic poets erred in taking for their subject the whole life or a number of actions of one person, assuming that a number of different and unrelated actions constituted a single action for being all related to one person. In the page under discussion he has shown that other poets were misled by history as commonly written into making a plot out of a number of actions that occurred in a single time span, assuming that, though they fail to converge toward a single end a number of actions form a single action simply because they occur within the same space of time. He now (23. 59a 37-59b 2) observes that still other poets have erred in basing their plots on actions which, though composed of interdependent parts, were yet too long. The error of these last is understood to have been exposed in the passage in which Aristotle showed why Homer did not undertake to sing the whole of the Trojan war even though that story is a single action composed of interdependent parts. Thus in the matter of choosing the right kind of actions for their plots all poets have done badly except Homer, who was saved from error either by his perfect mastery of the art of poetry or only by the excellence of his natural endowments. This proclaims his superiority over all other poets and reveals him to be more than human....

* * * * *

[2.131] Aristotle has said that actions such as those of the *Little Iliad* and the *Cypria*, which are composed of many parts and are consequently too long, are not suitable for epic poetry. Since, however, some poet might have asked how such actions are to be recognized, he says (23. 59b 2-7) that an action can be known to contain more than the necessary number of parts when it can supply subjects for many tragedies, whereas it is of suitable length when it can supply subjects for two at the most. Thus the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* each contains matter for not more than one or two tragedies, whereas the *Cypria* contains matter for many tragedies and the *Little Iliad* for more than eight. I am not certain, however, that this test is a reliable one. An action may consist of many or few parts none of which is a suitable subject for a tragedy, though they may all be of a suitable length. The *Iliad*, for instance, contains a number of actions which are of the proper length for a tragedy and yet are not tragic subjects. Such are the duels between Hector and Ajax (7. 206ff.), Menelaus and Paris (3. 340ff.), Diomedes and Aeneas (5. 297ff.), Hector and Patroclus (16. 712ff.), Hector and Achilles (22. 1ff.), and the encounter of Glaucus and Diomedes (6. 119ff.). The reason is that the personages in these episodes are not tragic, and the episodes themselves are not of a kind to arouse pity and fear. The fall of Troy, on the other hand, contains many parts that might be turned into tragedies, as, for instance, the story of Sinon and the wooden horse, the death of Priam, the death of Deiphobus, the rape of Cassandra, the death of Polyxena, the death of Astyanax, the death of Polydorus, the death of Creusa, and others.¹⁰ The reason is that these personages are tragic,

and their stories are therefore of a kind to arouse pity and fear. Thus Aristotle's test is not a sure one, the number of parts in an epic poem being no true indication of the number of tragedies that might be drawn from it. But even granting that the test is unexceptionable, why, we may still ask, does Aristotle offer the *Iliad* as an example of an epic poem with a suitable plot? The *Iliad* is a part of the *Little Iliad*, which, if it contained the whole of the Trojan war, must have contained the story of Achilles' wrath, which is a part of that war. What wonder, then, that the whole should consist of more parts than one of its parts, and that more tragedies may be drawn from a complete action than from a part of one?...

1b

Epic Poetry Divisible into Four Species

[2.135] The second characteristic that epic poetry shares with tragedy (24. 59b 7-9) is that it is divisible into four species: "the simple, the complex, the epic of character, and the epic of suffering." Aristotle does not take pains to prove this, but he could have done so by simply repeating for epic plots the arguments he advanced to prove that tragedies are classifiable into four species, and then adding that since epic plots, like tragic plots, are of four kinds (the simple, the complex, plots of character, and plots of suffering) epic poems must share the characteristics of epic plots and are therefore to be divided into the same four species. We have already spoken at sufficient length of the four species of plots (p. 212) thanks to which tragedies assume the form of one species or another, and what we have said should perhaps suffice as proof that epic poems are also of four species. But it will make for greater clarity if we reconsider the matter in the following fashion. Tragic and epic plots unfold in time and for that reason are composed of a beginning, a middle, and an end. All three of these parts may be filled with incidents that correspond with events that commonly occur in the world or with incidents lacking this correspondence; on the other hand one part may be filled with incidents of the first kind and the others with those of the second, or one part with those of the second and the rest with those of the first. This division of plots into four types gives rise to another division into eight. (1) All three parts of a plot may be filled with incidents of the first kind or (2) of the second. On the other hand some part or parts may be filled with incidents of the first kind but not the rest, as, to be specific, (3) the beginning and the middle, but not the end; (4) the beginning and the end, but not the middle; (5) the beginning, but not the middle and the end; (6) the middle and the end, but not the beginning; (7) the end, but not the beginning and the middle; (8) the middle, but not the beginning and the end.... The situations described under the first two heads render the plot "uniform," for they contain no reversals. Plots in which situations of this second type prevail Aristotle calls simple. Simple plots give less pleasure than the complex, and of simple plots those in which the incidents

are of the first type give less pleasure than those which are of the second. Hence the second type of simple plots are to be preferred by the tragic poet to the first. I believe that these considerations clarify what Aristotle means by the terms "simple" and "complex" epic plots.

Let us now see what he means by "epic of suffering" and "epic of character." All our actions terminate either in the fulfilment or the frustration of our desires. When our desires are fulfilled the result is happiness; when they are frustrated it is unhappiness. But since we desire what is beneficial to us and avoid what is injurious, it follows that the actions which fulfill our desires bring us some benefit and those which do not result in some injury. But since, again, the benefit or injury may be made great or small by ourselves, our friends, our kinsmen, or other causes, the actions must be divided not only into the beneficial and the injurious, but into such as are made beneficial or injurious by ourselves, our friends, our kinsmen, or other causes. Finally since actions that fulfill or frustrate our desires do so as the result of our own actions, the actions of others, or the operations of fortune, both beneficial and injurious actions are to be divided into three species according as they are performed by ourselves, by others, or by fortune. Therefore when an action results in some great injury to ourselves or our friends or kinsmen, it is called an action of suffering, and this is especially true if the injury is produced by ourselves or by fortune, or by the efforts of those from whom we should least expect an injury. On the other hand if the injury to us or to those dear to us is slight or consists in no more than loss of property, it would seem that the action is to be called one of character for reasons that we will advance presently. Now since the plot owes its peculiar quality to the action, and the epic poem to its plot, it is not surprising that Aristotle has included among the species into which he has divided epic poetry the epic of suffering and the epic of character.

But if there are also actions which bring benefits to ourselves or to those dear to us, or great benefits to another, these should be grouped together as a species of epic poetry opposed to the epic of suffering and be called the epic of joy. If, on the other hand, the benefits to ourselves or to those dear to us are slight, or if the only benefits are another's, the actions should likewise be grouped together as epics of character, but they should be distinguished from all other such epics, the former to be called also epics of character and suffering and the latter epics of character and joy. One cannot but wonder how Aristotle could have overlooked the epic of joy, which owes its character to the great benefits accruing to us or those dear to us, for in an earlier passage of the *Poetics* (14. 54a 4-9) he ranked plots with a happy ending above all others, especially if the benefit in them results from a sudden recognition of the kind that in *Iphigenia in Tauris* saved Orestes' life. Thus to the four species into which he divides epic poetry (two of them determined by whether the condition of the epic agent remains unaltered or suffers some change and two others by whether his sufferings are great or slight) Aristotle should have added two more, determined by the greatness or the slightness of the epic agent's joy.

It is, then, my opinion that by "epic of character" Aristotle means an epic

poem which tells of some slight personal injury suffered by the epic agent or some slight damage done to his possessions. The phrase is not intended to designate a species of epic poetry in which character is more important than in the other species, nor one in which the plot exists for the sake of the character, for to admit the existence of this second species would be to deny the conclusion arrived at earlier, that character exists for the sake of plot. Aristotle's designation arises from the fact that certain plots bring neither great benefits nor great injuries to ourselves or to our friends or kinsmen, so that the purpose of the action seems to be that of representing the character of the agents and of projecting character as the principal element in the plot rather than that of representing an action through certain agents. Thus in the *Odyssey* characters like Penelope and the male and female servants seem to be introduced to show the kind of person a good wife is in the absence of her husband, and a good or bad servant in the absence of his or her master, rather than to represent their actions, which are in fact neither necessary nor very useful to the principal action.

1C

Epic Poetry Composed of Four Qualitative Parts

[2.140] The third characteristic that epic poetry shares with tragedy is that it is composed of four qualitative parts—plot, character, thought, and language—for we are told (24. 59b 9–11) that it is composed of the same parts as tragedy except that it has neither melody nor spectacle. In this passage, then, "parts" is to be taken in the sense of qualitative parts, for the quantitative parts of epic poetry are not identical with those of tragedy and should therefore be discussed below, where Aristotle will discuss the features which epic poetry does not share with tragedy.

* * * * *

[2.140] Aristotle has said that epic poetry, like tragedy, is divisible into four species: simple and complex epics and epics of character and of suffering. He has also said that its qualitative parts correspond to four of the qualitative parts of tragedy. Now because some one might have insisted that there need be only two species of epic poetry as against four of tragedy, viz., simple epics and epics of character, since the epic may not have been invented as tragedy was for the purpose of arousing pity and fear, which are produced by poems that are complex and represent suffering, Aristotle replies (23. 59b 10–11) that in addition to the two species of epic poetry already mentioned there are also complex epics and epics of suffering, for epic poetry needs reversals and recognitions, which constitute a complex plot, and suffering, which produces the epic of suffering.

To grasp Aristotle's exact meaning we must first observe that a simple

tragedy is the opposite of a complex one and a tragedy of character the opposite of one of suffering and, in addition, that neither of the tragedies in these two pairs can exist in conjunction with the other. Four combinations, however, are possible: a complex tragedy may be (1) a tragedy of suffering or (2) a tragedy of character; and a simple tragedy (3) one of suffering or (4) of character. Of these four the most admired seem to be the complex tragedies of suffering — not all such tragedies, we must add, but only those which owe their complexity to a sudden reversal effected by a recognition of persons and its suffering to the representation of both the danger of impending suffering and an actualized deed of horror. Next to these the most admired are simple tragedies of suffering in which the suffering is caused not simply by the danger of it but also by an actualized deed of horror. The other two combinations are less admired, though of tragedies of character the simple are much less admired than the complex. In epic poetry, on the other hand, the highest praise seems to be reserved for simple epics of suffering but only if the suffering results from a deed of horror, as it does in the *Iliad*, and not from the danger of impending suffering. Next come those complex epics of character in which the complexity of the plot is due, as it is in the *Odyssey*, to a reversal that is not sudden and to accessory and not principal recognitions. The other two possibilities are less admired, simple epics of character much less than complex epics of suffering. Thus simple plots of suffering, which are best for epic poetry, are second best for tragedy; complex plots of character, which are second best for epic poetry, are third best for tragedy; complex plots of suffering, which, when the plot owes its complexity to a reversal caused by the sudden recognition of persons, are best for tragedy, have no place in epic poetry; and simple plots of character are hardly acceptable to either tragedy or epic poetry.

To sum up. Of the four kinds of plots just described, complex plots of character are rejected by tragedy, complex plots of suffering by epic poetry, and simple plots of character by both. On the other hand, simple plots of suffering are acceptable to both but are not of equal value to both, for they make for epic poetry of the first order and for tragedy of the second.

It is held as an irrefutable truth that the end of tragedy is to arouse pity and fear. This clearly explains why tragedy makes use of only complex and simple plots of suffering, and why plots of the first type are for tragedy superior to those of the second. But nothing that has been or is being said shows why epic poetry is better served by complex plots of character than by complex plots of suffering in which the plot owes its complexity to a sudden reversal produced by the recognition of persons. Perhaps the explanation is that epic poetry, unlike tragedy, does not have the arousal of pity and fear for its necessary end and is not restricted to a prescribed period of time which for tragedy is so brief that the actions cannot be memorable, as it must be, unless it contains a sudden reversal. Therefore Aristotle asserts (24. 59b 10–11) that there can be no complex epics of character without reversals and recognitions or simple epics of suffering without suffering.

[2.142] Aristotle has said in general that the four qualitative parts of epic poetry are also to be found in tragedy. He has also described certain specific requirements of the epic plot, showing that epic poetry not only had a plot, but a plot of a certain kind. Disregarding character, which has been clearly shown to be an element of epic poetry by the very fact that one species of epic poetry takes its name from it, he now says (24. 59b 11-12) that two qualitative parts of epic poetry are thought and language, and that these constituents of every epic poem must be skilfully fashioned. Thus the arguments in the probative speeches of an epic poem must be skilfully fashioned and appropriate, and the same is to be said for the language which clothes both its narrative parts and its probative speeches....

* * * * *

[2.142] Great is the praise that Aristotle bestows upon Homer when he asserts (24. 59b 12-13) that he was the first poet to make use of all four species of epic poetry and all four of its qualitative parts and to handle them all to perfection. Aristotle does not say that no poet before Homer ever made use of them, but that no single known poet ever used them all and used them in a creditable manner. Thus Homer enjoys the double honor of having been the first to make use of all the species of epic poetry and of all its parts and to handle all of them faultlessly.

* * * * *

[2.143] To prove the above Aristotle asserts (24. 59b 12-16) that Homer composed two poems, in one of which, the *Iliad*, he combines the simple epic and the epic of suffering, and in the other, the *Odyssey*, the complex epic and the epic of character, both of them suitable combinations.... To prove that the *Odyssey* is a complex epic he says metaphorically that recognitions are scattered throughout it. We may therefore infer that he holds the *Iliad* to be a simple epic, as if it were throughout a story of happiness or misery. With this judgment I cannot quite agree, for to my mind the *Iliad* contains many reversals. The victory, for instance, goes now to the Trojans and now to the Greeks; and Achilles and Agamemnon are enemies at one time and friends at another. Such reversals constitute a complex plot. What is more, the poem is not without recognitions, like that, among others, of Glaucus and Diomedes (6. 119ff.), and these recognitions likewise make for a complex plot. Aristotle also holds the *Iliad* to be an epic of suffering. This is another judgment that I find questionable, for though the poem contains many slayings none of them is of the kind that makes for a plot of suffering. What I mean is that no one in the *Iliad* dies by his own hand or is slain by a friend or a kinsman, and as Aristotle himself has said (14. 53b 19-25), it is only deaths of this kind that properly constitute plots of suffering. What is more, if deaths at the hands of enemies can make the *Iliad* an epic of suffering, why, we may well ask, do they not make the same type of poem of the *Odyssey*, where the suitors and the ser-

vants are slain by Ulysses and where Ulysses' companions are not only slain but are cruelly devoured (9. 287ff., 10. 80ff.) by the Cyclops and the Laestrygonas?

* * * * *

[2.144] Aristotle now says (24. 59b 16) that Homer displayed great skill in the handling not only of the four species of epic poetry but also of its four qualitative parts, and he makes special mention of thought and language (having made special mention of them above to say that they must be skilfully fashioned and appropriate), saying that in the handling of them he "surpassed every other epic poet." But he omits to offer a reason in support of his judgment, describing neither the method by which Homer surpassed all other poets to his glory or those by which these latter were surpassed by him to their blame. In the circumstances we can only accept his judgment and remain in the same state of ignorance as before.

2

Epic Poetry and Tragedy: Plot, Language, and Metre

[2.145] We come now (24. 59b 17-60a5) to a part of the *Poetics* that treats of the differences in two of the qualitative parts that tragedy and epic poetry have in common. (That they have these parts in common has already been shown.) The first of them is the plot, of which it has been said that it must be unified and must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Aristotle now adds that though both epic and tragic plots must answer this description, the epic plot must differ from the tragic in being longer. This declaration might lead some to infer that the epic plot may be immoderately long. To forestall that misunderstanding Aristotle determines its appropriate length. He then proceeds to give the reason for the greater length of epic plots, saying that, unlike the dramatic mode, the narrative is not restricted in time or place. The second is language, of which he has already said that it is a qualitative part of both tragedy and epic poetry. Now he adds that in epic poetry the language must be accompanied by only one kind of metre, the hexameter, and must make use of certain species of diction more than of others, viz., the strange word and the metaphor....

2a

The Length of Epic Poems

[2.146] Aristotle now asserts (24. 59b 18–22) that the proper length of an epic poem has already been determined. This statement is made in answer to a tacit question, for, having read that epic poems are longer than tragedies one might well ask precisely what the length of an epic poem should be. What Aristotle has said (23. 59a 29–37) is that the Trojan war as a whole is too vast a subject for a single epic poem, for it could not be visualized in its entirety in one view, that is, could not be retained in its entirety in the reader's memory. From this remark we infer that an epic poem must not exceed the limits beyond which it would not be possible for the reader to visualize the whole of it at once, so that if he should recall the beginning, the middle, or the end, his memory would not be so burdened as to forget either or both the other parts....

* * * * *

[2.147] An epic poem will be of the proper length if it is shorter than those composed by the older poets. Aristotle here refers (24. 59b 20–22) to such epic poems as the *Cypria* and the *Little Iliad*. Yet an epic poem shorter than these may be as short as a tragedy or even shorter. For this reason he adds that it must not be so much shorter as not to be equal in length to the group of tragedies represented on a single occasion. In other words an epic poem must be at least twice the length of a tragedy.

* * * * *

[2.147] Aristotle's statement that an epic poem should have the length of the many tragedies performed on a single occasion seems to be taken by the commentators to mean that it should be as long as the total length of the many tragedies performed successively in a dramatic contest in a single day and that the recitation of it should fill as much time as the performance of the tragedies.¹ To put it more briefly, they take Aristotle to mean that an epic poem should not be so long that it cannot be read in its entirety in a single day. This interpretation I find unacceptable. In the first place it must be an impossibility, a violation of the nature of things, to perform a number of tragedies successively on the same day. We have already shown that a tragedy has attained its appropriate length when it extends over a period of time equal to that required by the sun to run its course over our hemisphere or, as Aristotle has simply asserted (the reason was supplied by us), to complete one revolution around the earth.² How, then, can a number of tragedies be performed successively in a single day? In the second place, if Aristotle really held that an epic poem must not be so long that it cannot be read in a single day, would not his opinion undermine his admiration and reverence for Homer's more than human greatness? Could one holding that opinion commend Homer for the length

of his poems, both of them too long to be read even in several days? Aristotle's words cannot bear the interpretation given them by the commentators, and we must therefore inquire if they are not susceptible of another.

It should be borne in mind that there are two kinds of tragedy. In some the action is complete in itself and independent of any action preceding or succeeding it. Such a tragedy is the *Hippolytus* of Euripides. In others the action needs another to complete it. Of this kind are the *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroe*, and *Eumenides* of Aeschylus. These three tragedies consist, as it were, of one long action divided into three shorter ones, and they are so dependent upon one another that their poet seems to have composed them to be heard on a single occasion. It is perhaps to tragedies of this kind that Aristotle refers when he says that epic poems should be shorter than those of the older poets and longer than tragedies; and to forestall the possible inference that he would have the epic poet combine disparate actions to give his poem the necessary length, he adds that the poet will combine only interdependent actions, as if they were tragedies destined to be performed on a single occasion.

I will not neglect to add that Aristotle's words are susceptible of a second interpretation, viz., that epic poems must be as long as a number of tragedies heard on a single occasion. It is as if he were saying that epic poetry, as he will presently show, enjoys the privilege, denied to tragedy, of combining actions that occurred at different times and places and that thanks to this privilege an epic poem attains to the length of a number of tragedies, and should attain to that of a number performed simultaneously on different stages. Aristotle does not assert that tragedies have been or will be so performed; he only imagines that they are so as to convey to us some idea of the proper length of an epic plot and to explain why it should be greater than that of a tragedy. We may conclude, then, that Aristotle would have an epic poem neither shorter than a tragedy nor its equal in length. I must admit, however, that I find the reasons he offers in support of this conclusion unconvincing. For granting that a plot longer than one appropriate to a tragedy may be seen in one view, i.e., grasped in its wholeness by the mind in an instant, it does not follow that a shorter plot may not be so grasped much more easily; and granting, again, that an epic plot has more opportunities than a tragic for attaining length, I see no reason why it must always avail itself of them nor why it must always be required to do so. It is a fact that in Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* we have the not negligible example of an admirable epic poem with a shorter plot than one appropriate to a tragedy.

To understand this matter fully we must recall what Aristotle has already said, that tragedy is susceptible of two kinds of measurement: the first, sensible and external, and in his opinion extrinsic to the art, makes use of the clock, the other, intellectual and internal, makes its instrument the mind, which determines whether or not the tragedy represents a complete transition from misery to happiness or from happiness to misery. Considered as a thing measurable by the clock, a tragedy cannot, for the reasons already stated, last longer than the journey of the sun above the earth, and this time span, though not prescribed by the art, should nevertheless coincide with that set by the

intellect, since the two cannot, the nature of tragedy being what it is, be unequal; for as we have already observed the performance of a tragedy representing a transition from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness should fill as long a space of time as would be filled by the real or imaginary occurrence of the action.

Epic poetry too is susceptible of two kinds of measurement, the sensible and the intellectual. But the sensible, which determines the epic's time span, does not coincide with the intellectual, but is sometimes longer than the latter and sometimes shorter, for in an epic poem an action that has occurred in a very brief space of time is sometimes told at a leisurely pace and is allowed to fill many lines, whereas an action that extended over many years is told rapidly and is dispatched in a few words. Now just as the time covered by a tragedy has been strictly limited to twelve hours to spare the audience discomfort and the performers expense, so epic poets have been allowed to compose poems that cannot be recited in less than a number of days because this liberty entails neither discomfort for the audience nor expense or other loss for the rhapsodist. But if the epic poem is of the kind recited in the squares for the people's pleasure, it must not be so short—as Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* probably is—that it can be recited in less than a considerable portion of a day, but may be so long that it cannot be recited in less than a number of days. Thus it was because he thought that neither the *Iliad* nor the *Odyssey* could be recited in less than twenty-four days that Aristarchus divided each poem into twenty-four books.³ Measured by the intellectual or internal standard, however, an epic poem must be as long as a tragedy, i.e., its action must be of a length to permit a transition from misery to happiness or from happiness to misery, but with this difference, that the epic action may occur in different places and over many days, whereas a tragic action must occur in one day and in one place.

Now just as, for the reasons just stated, an epic poem must contain not more than one action, so the more admirable epic action will be the one in which the episodes are not set in a great many places and do not extend over a long period of time. The reason is obvious. It is that we marvel more at an action in which a very great reversal from one condition to its contrary occurs in one small place and in a short space of time than at one in which these restrictions are not observed. Those critics therefore are deceived who believe that in the *Odyssey* Homer began his story of Ulysses' wanderings and return to Ithaca with his departure from Troy. If he had we should not find it marvelous that he made of them a poem of such length, for the matter would have been furnished him by the extended periods of time and the various kinds of places in which such wanderings invariably find their setting, and it would have been rich in striking novelties. Equally deceived are those who believe that it was Virgil's intention to relate all the adventures of Aeneas from the time he left Troy till he arrived in Italy. Those wanderings filled more than seven years and extended over every part of the earth, and it would have not been a less than wonderful achievement if Virgil had worked such varied matter into a twelve-book poem that no reader would find tedious.

To sum up. If we apply what we have called sensible and external measurements, epic poems will be found different from tragedies only when they are longer, for the shorter epic poems reach their end in one day or a fraction of one day and the longer in an indefinite number of days, while tragedies extend over only some hours or at most an entire day, i.e., twelve hours. But if we apply what we have called intellectual and internal measurements, epic poems are of the same length as tragedies, for both represent a transition from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness. As for the space of time in which this transition occurs, it can be greater in epic poems than in tragedies, for, as we have already shown, the complex actions of tragic drama cannot properly extend to more than twelve hours, whereas those of epic poems may extend to more than a month. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that an epic poem will be the more admirable the shorter the space of time covered by its action. Epic poetry is also less restricted than tragedy in the matter of space, for a tragedy is confined not only to a single city, village, field, etc., but to as much of any of them as can be seen by the eyes of a single person, whereas an epic poem may rise to heaven and sink to hell and wander over earth and sea and air. Yet an epic poem will be more beautiful and more admirable the smaller the space to which it is restricted.

If we were to consider the proper limit to the number of characters in an epic or a tragic action we could come up with the conclusion that each may have one character or more than one, so that in this respect there is no difference between them. On the other hand the most laudable action is the one that restricts itself to one person, and therefore greater praise is due to the arrival of the unaccompanied Ulysses in Corfu or in Ithaca than to that of Aeneas accompanied by many friends in Africa or in Italy. For what wonder that Dido should have shown great affection and esteem to one who had landed in Africa with a great following, or that when this same hero landed in Italy with a following almost large enough to form an army he should have found men ready to ally themselves with him and lend him their support?

* * * * *

[2.152] Aristotle now says (24. 59b 23-31) that epic poems are longer than tragedies because they can represent a number of incidents occurring simultaneously in different places, whereas a tragedy can represent only what happens in one place and is enacted on a stage by a single group of actors. But there is another factor, and one ignored by Aristotle, that makes for this difference, and it is that epic poetry may represent not only a number of incidents occurring in different places in a single period of time, but also a number of incidents or only one extending over a long period of time in one or in more than one place. Representations of this latter kind are denied to tragedy, for, as we have already explained, it must limit itself to actions occurring in one place and within a period of twelve hours. Now Aristotle's statement that tragedy may not legitimately represent a plurality of incidents that happened at the same time in different places but only the one that is being

enacted on the stage and is the exclusive concern of the actors must not be taken to be more restrictive than it really is, for as we have shown tragedy may represent incidents occurring simultaneously in different places by means of messengers and prophecies. When it does this, however, it invades the province of epic poetry and the narrative mode, which may be the reason for Aristotle's silence, for he does not consider this device a natural one for tragedy and the dramatic mode....

* * * * *

[2.153] The freedom enjoyed by the epic poet to represent different parts of an action that occur simultaneously gives to epic poetry two qualities denied to tragedy, magnificence and variety. Magnificence grows out of magnitude, which epic poetry owes to the multiplicity of its episodes, and since a great number of them may be dissimilar, this multiplicity makes also for variety. As for the effect of these qualities upon the audience, magnificence engenders reverence and variety pleasure. Tragedy, on the other hand, is restricted, as we have seen, to a single action, and that inevitably makes for brevity, which in turn makes for meanness; it also lacks epic variety, and that makes for monotony. But meanness breeds contempt and monotony induces satiety....

* * * * *

[1.148] The actions adopted by tragedy were not and, as we shall show, could not in the nature of things have been of the same length as those proper to epic poetry, that is to say, they did not extend over a longer period of time than one revolution of the sun. The fact is, however, that tragedy at first adopted actions of a length suited to epic poetry, but that it later rejected them as unsuited to dramatic treatment. This explains why Aristotle takes pains to specify the maximum period of time over which a tragic action may extend, which is one revolution of the sun, but leaves the time limits of epic poetry indeterminate. For epic poetry tells its story through the single medium of language, and since language has the power to set all kinds of things, however remote in time and space, before our intellect, it can, without violence to its nature, recount an action that happened in different places over many years. This cannot be done by tragedy, for a tragic action may not extend beyond quite narrow limits of time or place—to be more precise, it must be set in a place no larger than the stage on which the actors perform and in a period of time no longer than that which is filled by their performance. But just as the place in question is limited by the stage, so the time is limited by the period within which the audience may sit in the theatre without discomfort, and this period, as Aristotle tells us and I myself believe, cannot be longer than one revolution of the sun, or twelve hours, for people cannot go without food, drink, and sleep and without relieving their bowels and their bladders and attending to other bodily needs for longer than twelve hours. Nor can they be deceived into believing that the action extends over a number of days and

nights when they can tell by the testimony of their senses that they have been sitting in the theatre only a few hours. That being so, let Plautus and Terence find what justifications they can for those comedies of their authorship in which the actions fill more than a single day.⁴

Though epic poetry, as we have said, is not bound by this law and can recount an action which occurred not only over many days but over many years and not only in a place ampler than any stage but in a place remote from the main scene of the action, yet it cannot protract its narrative to the point where it would become improbable that the poet could have recited the whole of it without intermission, i.e., in as many hours as his audience could have listened to him without discomfort. This is the reason why long epic poems are divided into books and why the books are never lengthened beyond the point at which the poet could have plausibly recited and the audience have heard any one of them without discomfort in one unbroken period of time. Hence I cannot but be astonished at those who affirm that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were each divided into twenty-four books by Aristarchus; for I find it incredible that Homer, the most discerning of poets, could have been guilty of composing the equivalent of a twenty-four-book poem without divisions of any kind, as if intending to recite it in its entirety before a single audience without intermission. What seems to me beyond doubt is that he judiciously divided his two poems into the necessary number of parts and that after his own division had been disturbed, as is probable, by the scribes, Aristarchus undertook to correct the scribes' errors and to restore Homer's original division, thus reducing both poems to the form in which we have received them. Yet for all that he is generally esteemed as a man of excellent judgment, Aristarchus proved unequal to the task of dividing the two poems acceptably or of restoring Homer's divisions, for he divided Ulysses' recital of his wanderings at the court of Alcinous into four books despite the fact that Ulysses began and ended it in a single evening. Obviously some one is at fault: either Homer for having made Ulysses relate in one evening a series of adventures that he could not plausibly have crowded into so few hours; or, if he could have, then Aristarchus for having divided the narrative into four books, as if it could not be recited in less than four evenings. I am of the opinion, however, that the fault lies not with Homer but with Aristarchus, for it seems to me that the four books in question could be recited in one evening without strain. Aristarchus' error was followed by Virgil, who in ignorance of the correct procedure and simply following what he held to be a good example, divided Aeneas' recital of his wanderings at Dido's court into two books, though it is completed without break in a single evening. An error no less great than Aristarchus' and Virgil's was committed by Plato when he composed the *Republic*. The book is in the dramatic mode and purports to record a conversation held in one evening. But the conversation is so long that it not only could not be presented on the stage in that space of time but could only with strenuous effort be read through rapidly in four days; and though it is reported to have taken place in one evening, Plato divided his record of it into ten books, so that he erred not only in dividing into books something that should not have been cut up

into parts but also in crowding into it the discussions of a great multitude of subjects that could not have been held in so short a space of time.

At this point a question arises. If the epic poet may legitimately divide his narrative, which contains not more than one action, into a number of books and may recite one book a day over a number of days, why may not the tragic poet divide his tragedy into a number of parts and have it enacted on the stage in as many days? I cannot deny that he may. Yet it is to be borne in mind that with the end of the first day and the coming of night the characters continue to speak and act and that what they say and do would not be seen or heard by the audience, who by then will have returned to their homes. What is more, it would be extremely difficult so to order things that the second day would be full of memorable business and dialogue of the kind to merit the attention of the audience and even more difficult to fill the third day with appropriate matter that did not require resetting the stage, laying out more money, and overtaxing the actors' memories with more lines. Nor do I believe that the people could be induced to give up several successive days to dramatic spectacles, for they have livelihoods to earn and their daily work to attend to. Difficulties of this sort are unknown to epic poetry. An epic poem may be recited in parts, with an interval of several days between one part and the next without thereby doing violence to its nature, and this method of presentation would not entail expense for scenery or lay excessive burdens on anyone's memory or hold people from their occupations on workdays....

2b

The Language and the Metre of Epic Poems

[2.154] Aristotle now considers (24. 59b 31–60a 5) the differences in the handling of language, the second of the qualitative parts which, as he has said, tragedy and epic poetry have in common. Epic poetry, he holds, may not reduce the language to any kind of metre or to the metre employed by tragedy but is restricted to heroic or hexameter verse, and the hexameter is likewise not compatible with every kind of diction but has a special affinity with words that produce the effect of grandeur, such as strange words and metaphors. But since some one might have asked how this metre came to be assigned to epic poetry and the other kind denied to it, Aristotle says that the issue was decided by experience. In proof of this he asserts that if some one will produce a narrative in some metre other than the heroic or in a variety of other metres, the resulting poem would have to be judged a failure. We must therefore believe that failures of this sort were not unknown to the earlier epic poets and that their experience of them led to their abandonment of all metres except the heroic, recognizing it as the natural and appropriate one for epic poetry. But Aristotle is a philosopher and therefore, unlike those earlier poets, he will not rest content with the teaching of experience but will search out the reasons

why the heroic metre is the appropriate and the natural one for narrative poetry. What he finds is that the trochaic tetrameter was discovered to be the appropriate and natural metre for songs that were accompanied by dancing, the dancing movement of the metre having been recognized as well adapted to the movement of the dancers. On the other hand the iambic pentameter was discovered to be the appropriate and natural metre for dialogue, for it was observed that people engaged in conversation often unconsciously spoke in iambs and that there is a certain correspondence between the movement of the metre and the movement of the dialogue. For though the iambic, unlike the trochaic, is not a dancing metre, it nevertheless is not without a certain movement which it owes to the agility of the iambic foot, just as though the speakers of the dialogue do not leap and bound as dancers do, yet they are compelled to move now and then by their passions. Finally, the heroic hexameter was discovered to be the appropriate and natural metre for narrative poetry thanks to three of its properties: its stability, which it owes especially to the spondee and which accords with the stability of the rhapsodist, who is not obliged to move about as much as actors engaged in dialogue or those who dance as they sing;¹ its magnificence, which accords with the magnificence of the epic matter, which is heroic, consisting, as it does, of the actions of gods and kings; and its capaciousness, which accords with the grandeur of the epic matter and the great length of the epic poem....²

* * * * *

[2.156] Some say that the heroic metre owes to the dactyl and the spondee not only its stability but also its capaciousness and amplitude, for these feet are more capacious than either the iamb or the trochee. This is undeniable. Yet it would seem that the greater "stability and capaciousness" of which Aristotle speaks (24. 59b 34-36) refers to the greater receptivity of the heroic metre to words of all kinds. That this is Aristotle's real meaning is proved by the words which immediately follow those just quoted, "Hence it is especially receptive to strange words and metaphors." The sense of Aristotle's words may be expanded thus: The heroic metre is appropriate to epic poetry, first, by virtue of its stability, it being the most stable of metres thanks to its constituent metrical units (the dactyl and the spondee), and the epic being the most stable of all species of poetry because it is recited without bodily movement; and, second, by virtue of its capaciousness, it being able to receive a greater variety of words than either the iamb or the trochee and especially, among others, strange words and metaphors, and the epic being the most capacious of all species of poetry because it can hold a plot of greater length and variety than any other. Observe that Aristotle offers no reason for calling the heroic the most stable and most capacious of metres. Observe also that though we have conjectured that Aristotle considers it the most stable of metres because it is composed of dactyls and spondees and the most capacious because it will take words of all kinds, yet our conjecture merely affirms that the thing stands so without telling why. Let us therefore try to account for

the phenomenon as briefly as we may. As for the stability of the heroic metre, which it owes to its being composed of dactyls and spondees, it is to be noted that one long syllable is more stable than two short ones, even though the former is no more than the fusion of two of the latter. Further, a foot consisting of one long syllable followed by one or more short ones is more stable than one consisting of one or more short ones followed by a long. Hence the heroic metre, which is composed of dactyls and spondees, is more stable than it would be if it were composed of other metrical units having the same number of beats. For of the five feet that can be constituted of four beats the dactyl and the spondee are the most stable, being composed the one of one long syllable followed by two short and the other of two long, whereas the proceleusmatic is composed of four short, the anapest of two short followed by one long, and the amphibrach of a long, a short, and a long. It is hardly necessary to add that dactyls and spondees are more stable than metrical units composed of three beats, as are the tribrach, with three short beats, the iamb, with a short one and a long, and the trochee, with one long and a short. It is of these feet that the pentameter and tetrameter lines are composed. As for the capaciousness of the heroic metre, it must also be borne in mind that the verse form selected to narrate a plot that is at once long, varied, ancient, and magnificent must not be segmented but must have a continuous flow and be so constituted as to promote the "heightened and copious style" of which Her-mogenes speaks,³ being duly accommodated to the great profusion and variety of the things of which it must be the narrative vehicle. Such is the nature of the heroic metre in the Latin and Greek tongues, but not of the *ottava rima* (invented, as it is believed, by Boccaccio as a substitute for the heroic metre), in the vulgar tongue. Further, since the stories told by epic poetry are ancient, its metre must be hospitable to archaic diction, the diction which Plutarch says Homer did not eschew in composing his epic poems.⁴ Then, too, since the metre is used in telling of the actions of foreign personages or of incidents that occurred in foreign lands, it must also be hospitable to foreign, i.e., strange, words. Finally, since epic poetry relates grand and magnificent actions, the metre must be capable of receiving words that will lend grandeur and dignity to the matter. Of this kind are not only archaic and foreign words and metaphors, but all those which Aristotle has grouped under the generic term "strange." Considering, then, the great variety of words that the heroic metre must be able to receive, it need occasion no surprise that it must be more capacious than any other. The words I have in mind are of the varieties that lend grandeur and dignity to the things expressed....

3

How Epic Poetry Differs from Tragedy

[2.162] Epic poetry differs from tragedy in two respects, its full narrative mode (24. 60a 5–11), of which Homer was the inventor, and its greater opportunities for representing the marvelous (11–18), which it owes to its not being restricted to one given place, like a stage.

3a

The Narrative Mode

[2.162] Let us begin by discussing the first. We must not believe that epic poets other than Homer never permitted their characters to speak in their own person. The difference between them and Homer is that they did so only rarely and that the speeches they put in the mouths of their characters were brief. Hence Aristotle says, "For the others intrude themselves into the poem throughout and imitate few things and infrequently." Homer's glory, then, is not that he alone and many centuries ago initiated the practice of introducing the characters to speak in an epic poem, but that he introduces them more frequently than the other poets and gives them more lines to speak. This practice of Homer's Aristotle has already mentioned twice (3. 48a 20–22; 4. 48b 34–38), though in doing so he has used such words as "dramatically," "imitator," etc., which render his meaning somewhat obscure. For, as we have already explained, the mode of epic poetry is not strictly dramatic but similitudinary,¹ though it is called dramatic by Aristotle because it bears some resemblance to the dramatic mode. Further, Homer's method is here said to be the only one that can be called imitative, not because the poet who tells the whole story in his own person is not an imitator, but because direct discourse is a better device for reflecting, representing, and imitating the spoken word than language is for reflecting, representing, and imitating things. Hence though a comparison of the two methods might lead one to say somewhat loosely that the first method is imitative and the second is not, the statement would lose all validity if it were made in an absolute sense; for if the epic poet were not an imitator when representing things by means of words, we should have to conclude—thereby nullifying what has already been established—that the narrative mode was not imitative, and the action represented could not be said to have been imitated in any mode. It is therefore clear that Aristotle calls imitative the mode which I call similitudinary so as to distinguish it from the purely narrative, while he calls the purely narrative non-imitative because it is less imitative than the similitudinary. Following this line of reasoning we may say that the truly representative and dramatic mode, i.e., the imitation of an action by actors upon the stage, is, as com-

pared with the similitudinary and narrative modes, the only imitative one because it imitates with greater fidelity than these others, which by comparison are not imitative at all. Following the same method we may say further that the medium in which an action is most faithfully imitated is, as compared with the rest, the only imitative one, and that the others are by comparison not imitative at all. Hence it seems to us safe to say that of the three media of imitation—language, dancing, and music—language is the only imitative one, and dancing and music are, by comparison, not true instruments of imitation because imitations in these media are not as faithful as those made in the medium of language. Continuing along the same line of reasoning, we may say that the matter that best lends itself to imitation is, as compared with every other, the only matter that can be called imitable. Therefore since a particularized action lends itself better than a generalized to imitation by the epic poet, it follows that a particularized action is truly imitable and that, by comparison, a generalized action is not. All of which seems to lead to the conclusion that Homer, who introduces his characters to speak frequently and at length and imitates particularized actions, is an imitator and consequently a poet, whereas Virgil, whose characters speak seldom and much more briefly than Homer's, and who imitates generalized actions, is not an imitator and consequently not a poet.

But if in that part of an epic poem in which he recounts events in his own words and never represents a character as speaking in his own person, the author, as Aristotle holds, is not an imitator and consequently not a poet, what shall we say of the same author in that part of his poem in which he neither recounts an action nor represents a character speaking, but passes judgment on the subjects of his narrative, dealing out praise or blame, drawing from them lessons for the benefit of the commonwealth, and making of them instruments for the teaching of personal and civic virtue? An author of this sort can confidently be denied the name of imitator by reason of his mode, for he never represents any of his characters speaking in his own person—I mean any of the characters whose actions constitute the plot—and also by reason of his matter, for it is a thing distinct from the plot, springing, as it does, from feelings aroused in him by the action. And anyone who is not an imitator either in the mode of his imitation or in its matter is to that extent not a poet. Authors who indulge themselves in this fashion lapse into an error of no small consequence, for they not only forfeit the name of poet in certain parts of their poems, but by their habit of passing judgment or making comments of one kind or another on their actions—and thereby disclosing that their passions and interests are involved—they also forfeit the reader's faith and awake in him suspicions of their veracity in those parts in which they are truly imitators and poets. Moreover, by neglecting their proper office of narrators and improperly assuming that of preachers and moral censors, they render themselves odious, for by doing so they betray a certain pride and self-righteousness. This is an error into which Homer never fell and Virgil did not always succeed in avoiding.² More frequently than by Virgil the error is committed by lesser poets than he, and especially by Lucan, who preaches a long sermon at the very begin-

ning of his *Pharsalia*,³ and most of all by Ariosto in his *Orlando Furioso*. That the practice is to be condemned was recognized by Boccaccio (*Dec.* 10. 9), who puts the following words in the mouth of one of his characters: "Lovely ladies, doubtless Filomena speaks truly of friendship, and rightly did she at the close of her story complain that it is nowadays so little prized by mankind; and if we were here to correct the faults of men or even to reprehend them, I would add a long discourse to her complaints." The judgments and comments in question would properly be made by the chorus when the action that prompts them is part of a tragedy; but when it is part of an epic poem they are properly made by the common folk who have witnessed it, so that epic poets who appropriate to themselves a role that rightly belongs to these must be condemned as usurpers. That role Homer never fails to assign, as is fitting, to the right persons, as when he assigns to the troops the comment (*Il.* 2. 271ff.) on the cudgeling that Thersites had just received from Ulysses before their eyes: "To be sure, Ulysses has done many splendid things before this," etc.

* * * * *

[2.165] As the author of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Margites*, Homer is worthy of commendation for the many things that he either invented or improved. Some of them we have already considered and others will be considered below. But he is also to be commended for having made frequent use of the similitudinary or dramatic mode, in that he brings his characters in to speak in their own persons, a practice that has been mentioned in the two passages referred to above. The praise due to this device, as Aristotle seems to believe, proceeds solely from the fact that in that part of the epic poem in which the characters are brought in to speak in their own persons the narrative mode is transformed into the dramatic, which sets the things it imitates more vividly before the senses than does the narrative. It is my opinion, however, that it may proceed from a second cause, from the fact that it requires more labor and greater acumen to represent characters speaking frequently and at length without wearying the audience than to relate actions and deliberations in one's own words. Thus the praise accorded to Homer must be great because he chose to put his hand to the more difficult of two tasks while the others were content to embrace the less difficult....

3b

The Marvelous in Epic Poetry

[2.169] Aristotle now (24. 60a 11-18) considers the marvelous in relation to epic poetry and tragedy. Epic poetry, he says, can produce greater marvelous effects than tragedy and ought to avail itself of its resources. But since some one might have asked how much greater these effects should be in epic poetry than in tragedy, he replies that they ought to be greater in proportion to the

greater number of resources it has for producing them.¹ (Note that it is not Aristotle's intention in this passage to enumerate all these resources, either because he assumes that the number can be clearly enough inferred from what he has already said about epic poetry or for some other reason. He is content to name only one, which is that unlike tragedy epic poetry is not bound to make its agents and their actions visible to the eye.) And since, again, some one might have asked why tragedy should contain marvelous incidents and why such incidents should be proportionately more marvelous in epic poetry, he replies that, as has already been explained, the end of poetry is pleasure, and since "the marvelous gives pleasure" it follows that the representation of it may be reasonably required of both tragedy and the epic so that in these two species poetry may attain its proper end....

* * * * *

[2.169] But if it is appropriate to introduce the marvelous in tragedy, it is, Aristotle asserts, "proportionately" much more appropriate and permissible to introduce it in epic poetry. It is as if he were saying, "If the marvelous element in an action restricted to a single day and a single stage produces an effect measurable as one degree, the same element in an action which, like the *Odyssey*, extends, say, over a period of thirty-seven days and takes place on both land and sea should produce an effect measurable as thirty-seven degrees...." What is more, epic poetry enjoys other advantages besides those of ampler time and space. Except for the one mentioned in the next sentence, none of them is identified, either, as I have said, because they are assumed to be known or for some other reason.

Since, as Aristotle points out, the agents in epic poetry "do not appear visibly before an audience," it follows that one of the powers possessed by epic poetry and not by tragedy for making its productions marvelous in the highest degree is that of suppressing those parts of the plot which if duly represented would effectively reduce the marvelousness of the whole. Epic poetry may treat the parts that would weaken or destroy the marvelous in three ways: it may suppress them entirely, it may represent them summarily and in general terms, or it may represent them in their particularity and in words that describe each thing exactly as it is and as it happened. This last bears the closest resemblance to the mode of representation peculiar to the drama. Hence the parts of a plot that cannot enhance the marvelous or will actually impair it will surely impair or even destroy it if they are represented in the third manner, but the parts apt to create the marvelous or to enhance it must not be suppressed or represented summarily; they must, rather, be represented in the third manner, i.e., in all their particularity. Note also that epic poetry can not only represent these latter parts in particularized terms and thereby almost make them visible in the manner of a tragic action on the stage, but can in addition enhance the marvelous in them because the narrative mode permits it to make visible the thoughts of its agents and other invisible things, as well as past and future events and others remote from the scene of the action, a power denied to

tragedy representing an action on the stage....

* * * * *

[2.170] If we wish to understand fully and to judge intelligently the words (24. 60a 14-15) "The events surrounding the pursuit of Hector would be ridiculous on the stage," it seems to me necessary to draw a distinction between two types of actions. Some actions can be represented on the stage exactly as they happen in life. Such are conversations between two or three persons. Others cannot be represented convincingly exactly as they happen for a variety of reasons, of which for the time being we will name four: because they are obscene, because they are difficult to stage, because they are remote in time or place, and because they are invisible. Obscene actions, such as carnal relations between the sexes, amorous kisses, and other lascivious acts, must not be brought on the stage out of regard not only for the modesty of the public, which includes bashful girls and women, but for that also of the actors, who will with difficulty be induced to enact some obscenity before the public in a convincing manner. The second kind consists of actions that are difficult to stage, as are slayings, crucifixions, hangings, beheadings, tortures, metamorphoses, and the like. Such actions are to be excluded because, unless they are properly represented, they fall short of the desired effect upon the audience and more often than not will move it to laughter rather than to tears. [This, as we have already pointed out, was the effect of the Passion of our Lord in those localities where it was customarily enacted, so that the people were little edified by the spectacle.]² The third kind consists of actions which occur at an earlier or later time than that in which the tragedy has been set or at a distance from the place (as represented by the stage) to which it has been restricted; and of this latter kind are also those that involve too many persons and too great a number of things to be crowded into a space the length and width of a stage. The fourth and last consists of invisible actions that cannot be apprehended by the eyes and ears but only by the mind, and such are visions, dreams, apparitions of the dead, self-communings, and the like.

Now if the pursuit of Hector by Achilles had happened exactly as Homer describes it (*Il.* 22. 131ff.), if the Greek host had actually encircled the pursuing Achilles and the pursued Hector and had stood idly by—with arms akimbo, as the phrase goes—content with the role of mere spectators in obedience to Achilles' bidding, who had signaled to them with a shake of the head to refrain from joining in the fight so that he and he alone might reap the glory of slaying Hector and avenging Patroclus—if all this had happened exactly as described, the inaction of the Greek warriors would never have moved an eyewitness to laughter, nor can I imagine why an audience should find the scene ludicrous on the stage. In my opinion, however, that scene neither should nor could be brought upon the stage, not, to be sure, for the reason offered by Aristotle—for it would not be ludicrous for an army to refrain from fighting in obedience to a superior's command—but because it would be impossible to construct a stage vast enough to hold a city as large as Troy and a host as

numerous as the Greek and to provide, in addition, a field spacious enough for the proper enactment of the pursuit of the one hero by the other. (The reason why actions of this sort should be excluded from the stage was offered in the preceding paragraph.) But here someone might ask: "If it is not really ludicrous that the Greek host should have been content to stand by as spectators, why did not Homer tell us so explicitly? Why did he pass over their inaction in silence, saying only (ll. 205-7): 'And godlike Achilles made a sign with his head to the host forbidding them to hurl their deadly arrows against Hector, lest one of them should smite him and win glory, and he himself come second?'" My reply is that Homer concealed nothing but described the situation with all possible clarity when he said that Achilles forbade the host to hurl deadly arrows against Hector; yet if he had chosen not to describe it, his silence would not have disproved our contention that the exact description of the situation would not be matter of a kind to excite laughter. Surely no one has ever been moved to laughter by Virgil's explicit description of a similar situation in the *Aeneid* (12. 742-45). And note that Aristotle makes no exaggerated claims for Homer when he insists that what Homer excluded from his poetry no other poet can introduce into an epic poem or bring upon the stage without provoking laughter and, consequently, that Homer appropriated all such matter as could be treated with gravity, without at the same time insisting that other poets would find no suitable matter for their poems that has not already been made part of his....

* * * * *

[2.173] Aristotle has established that epic poetry can represent greater marvels than tragedy because the narrative mode enables the poet to suppress whatever could weaken the marvelous or destroy it. To this he should have added that Achilles' pursuit of Hector would be more marvelous if it had been explicitly said that Achilles had pursued Hector without material help from the Greeks and without their encouragement, for Hector on his part engaged in the duel without help or encouragement from the Trojans. And it was, in fact, to render the pursuit more marvelous and to enhance Achilles' glory that Homer chose not to mention the presence of the Greek host, never so much as hinting that they were so ready and eager to attack Hector that only a signal from Achilles could prevail on them to desist. The use of this device for preserving the force of the marvelous would be out of the question in a tragedy being enacted on the stage. And if some tragic poet should represent the pursuit of Hector by Achilles in the belief that the Greek host in full view of the audience would not weaken the force of the marvelous in the scene, he would be the victim of self-deception, and his self-deception would perhaps provoke the people's laughter; from which we might conclude that the laughter would be caused not by the host's inactivity but by the poet himself for having witlessly introduced a great number of soldiers standing idly on the stage to the detriment of the marvelous element in the action. It is by pointing to things of this sort that we can perhaps establish the soundness of Aristotle's observa-

tion (24. 60a 14-16) that "the events surrounding the pursuit of Hector would be ridiculous on the stage, [as, for instance,] the army's standing by and not giving chase, and Achilles' forbidding them to move with a shake of the head." What Aristotle brings out in these words is that an audience would laugh at a tragic poet who, intending to represent the pursuit of Hector as a marvelous action redounding to Achilles' glory, should represent Achilles as fighting a lone Hector with the encouragement of the whole Greek host. Hence when Virgil conceived a similar pursuit of Turnus by Aeneas, a pursuit that should be marvelous in itself and bring glory to Aeneas, he did not represent Aeneas as fighting with the encouragement of his army while Turnus fought alone, but invented a scene in which each enjoyed the encouraging presence of his own forces (*Aen.* 12. 704-5; 730-31; 758-62). It must be admitted, however, that Virgil seems to diminish the internal consistency of the episode when he says (12. 744), "On all hands the Teucrians enclosed him [Turnus] in a dense ring," which conveys the impression that Turnus' army was absent from the scene. But if we desire to understand fully why Aristotle considers Achilles' pursuit of Hector to be ludicrous, we should read a later passage in the *Poetics* (25. 60b 26ff.) where he offers his solutions to certain poetic problems and where he repeats that the scene in question is incredible (p. 290).

* * * * *

[2.175] The end of poetry, as has been said more than once, is pleasure; and since the marvelous is especially capable of producing pleasure, it follows that the tragic poet must do his utmost to achieve the marvelous, and the epic poet, because of his greater opportunities, to achieve it in a much higher degree. The marvelous, then, is pleasurable (24. 60a 17). Yet it does not seem to be always attended by pleasure; in fact it seems very frequently to produce displeasure. The experience of Oedipus, for instance, who unwittingly slew his father and married his mother, is marvelous in a very high degree. Yet it not only brought great woe to Oedipus and Jocasta, but can bring great sorrow to us, who come to know it many centuries after it occurred. That being so, we can eliminate the apparent contradiction by saying that an occurrence may produce four effects upon our emotions. The first is the pleasure we take in learning anything whatever, and especially in learning that something has happened which we had thought impossible. The second is the pleasure we feel when things happen as we wish them to, i.e., when their outcome is for us the desirable one. The third is the displeasure we feel when the thing that happens is not out of the ordinary, when it is something from which we can learn nothing new. This displeasure may be called satiety. The fourth is the displeasure we feel when things happen as we do not wish them to, i.e., when their outcome is for us the undesirable one. Thus if what happens is marvelous and accords with our wishes, as when Orestes is saved from impending death by an unforeseen recognition, we feel a double pleasure, the one arising from our seeing something happen which we had thought impossible, which is the pleasure properly afforded by the marvelous, and the other from what is to

us a desirable outcome. These two pleasures were recognized by Boccaccio (*Dec.* 9. 6), who ascribed the first to the manner in which the thing occurs and the second to its outcome. In the story of Pinuccio and Adriano, who had slept, the one with Niccolosa and the other with her mother, he says: "Having remounted their steeds they returned to Florence, no less content with the manner in which the thing had happened than with its outcome." If the occurrence is marvelous and at the same time abhorrent to us, we feel both pleasure and displeasure, pleasure because we see something happen which we had thought impossible (as when a son unwittingly marries his mother, as Oedipus did), displeasure because the occurrence is one we abominate and would rather it had never happened. If the occurrence is not out of the ordinary and consequently not marvelous and is of a kind to fall in with our desires, we feel both pleasure and displeasure, pleasure because it is for us the desirable one, displeasure because it is not out of the ordinary. Finally if the occurrence is not out of the ordinary and its outcome not what we would desire it to be, we feel a double displeasure, first because we have known it to happen before and consequently do not find it marvelous and secondly because we find it abominable and would rather it had never happened. Thus of these four types of occurrences the first gives us a double pleasure, the fourth a double displeasure, and the second and third each a pleasure and a displeasure. Aristotle is therefore right in saying that the marvelous is pleasurable; but considered not by itself but in conjunction with an incident whose outcome conflicts with our desires it is at once pleasurable and displeasurable....

4

Faults to be Avoided by Epic Poetry and Tragedy

[2.184] Aristotle now (21. 60a 26–60b 5) addresses himself to the faults which should be shunned by both epic and tragic poets and to the ways in which these faults may be rendered tolerable. Thus the impossible becomes tolerable in both tragic and epic poetry if it is attended by the credible, so much so that a poet should prefer a credible impossibility to an incredible possibility. Again, the absurd or incongruous, a vice which the poet must seek to avoid, becomes tolerable in tragedy if it is made to happen off-stage, and in both tragedy and epic poetry if it is counterbalanced by many concomitant excellences that may prevent the harm it seemed capable of doing. Finally, amplifications that serve no useful function become tolerable when they are clothed in noble language and are made radiant with its splendor....

The Impossible and the Incredible¹

[2.185] An episode may be possible, impossible, credible, or incredible. Considered singly, two of these qualities are commendable and two are not. The commendable qualities are possibility and credibility, the others are impossibility and incredibility. These four qualities form four combinations: possibility and credibility, possibility and incredibility, impossibility and credibility, impossibility and incredibility. Of these combinations two are commendable and two are not. The commendable ones are possibility and credibility, and impossibility and credibility; impossibility and incredibility, and possibility and incredibility are not commendable. And since credibility accompanied by possibility or impossibility results in two commendable combinations, and possibility accompanied by credibility or incredibility in only one (possibility and credibility), it follows that credibility is more desirable in poetry than possibility, and incredibility less desirable than impossibility....

* * * * *

[2.187] To our way of thinking "possibility" is to be understood as the potency inherent in an action that meets with no impediment of any kind to its actualization. Thus when she fled from Colchis Medea took her brother with her and held him captive; it was therefore possible for her to slay him, and the circumstances present no visible impediment to the actualization of the intended fratricide. On the other hand "credibility" is to be understood as the probability thanks to which one can readily believe that the action of which it is a property was eventually actualized. Thus, returning to our example, if Medea had Absyrtus in her power it was possible for her to slay him; at the same time it is probable and credible that she would slay him if we consider her fierce and cruel nature and the perilous circumstances in which she found herself at the time, when nothing could have saved her own life and that of her beloved Jason but the death of Absyrtus. This example will suffice to illustrate the nature of an action that is at once both possible and credible.

As for episodes that are at once possible and incredible, we shall find one in the transformation of Cupid into Ascanius at the instance of Venus in the *Aeneid* (1. 657ff.). To Cupid, who was a god, this transformation was possible, for the gods are capable of this and greater miracles; but it is incredible that Cupid assumed Ascanius' form and that Venus urged him to do so, since he could have enkindled Dido's love for Aeneas without change of form by simply piercing her with his golden dart, which is the usual manner in which he enkindles the love of gods and men. What is more, when we are told that Venus bore Ascanius with her to Idalium, we are left curious to know where she returned him on the following morning. Was it to the ships or to Carthage? If to the ships, whence she had abducted him in his sleep, the Trojans

there must have wondered how he could be among them, believing, as they did, that he had gone to Carthage on the previous night. If to Carthage he must have betrayed by word or deed the fact that he had never been there before that morning, for he must doubtless have asked, "How came I here, and when?" and must have done something that could have led the Carthaginians to infer that he had never made his way to them on his own feet. Again, what need was there for Venus to convey him in his sleep to Idalium? The time he spent there had to be short, for the distances to be traversed in that night were very great, and for all the exquisite delights of the place Ascanius could have known no greater pleasures there than on the desert coast of Barbary, for he was there at night and he was fast asleep.

Episodes that are at once impossible and credible are very plentiful, but we shall discuss only three. The first is Dido's reception of Aeneas. That Dido should have entertained Aeneas is impossible, for the two were not contemporaries;² yet the festivities described by the poet are credible, for once granted that they are possible they are depicted in such a way as to be rendered probable. The second, from the *Odyssey* (17. 300ff.), is Argo's recognition of Ulysses after a lapse of twenty years. Some believe that no dog can live to twenty, though in his *History of Animals* Aristotle asserts that, except for the Laconian breed, dogs may indeed live to their twentieth year and that Homer is therefore not to be blamed for representing Ulysses' dog as still alive at that age.³ But once it is granted that a dog may live to twenty the incident in the *Odyssey* becomes credible, for a dog will recognize its master however many the years of their separation. The third is the account of Virgil's first journey to Giudecca in the *Divine Comedy*. This journey is an impossibility because Dante represents it as occurring just as Caesar and Pompey were about to fight a battle in Thessaly, and at that time Virgil was not yet dead.⁴ But once it is assumed that Virgil was dead, the journey becomes credible, as does his sojourn in Giudecca during the absence of the soul that had been summoned to its dead body by Erichtho, for by that sojourn Divine Justice was not defrauded of the penalty which the absent soul was condemned to pay either with its own sufferings or, during its absence, with another's.

As for episodes of the fourth and last type, which are at once impossible and incredible, we shall find an example of them in the transformation of Aeneas' ships into nymphs (*Aen.* 9. 69ff.), which we have already discussed. If it is true, as some hold, that inanimate objects cannot be transformed into deities, the incident is impossible; and it is also incredible for the reasons we have already offered.

Unless I am deceived the discussion would have been clearer and the subject have been made more intelligible if the qualities now engaging our attention had been increased to six and grouped under three heads, each containing one quality to be sought and one to be avoided. The first two groups, which have so far been discussed, would consist of possibility and impossibility, and credibility and incredibility; the third of what we may call utility and disutility, according as the episode does or does not benefit the plot. And just as possibility and credibility are desirable in and by themselves, and impossibility and in

credibility are not, so utility is desirable in and by itself and disutility is not. Finally, since each quality in one group is always combined with one quality in each of the other two, the resultant combinations are eight in number: (1) possibility, credibility, and utility; (2) possibility, credibility, and disutility; (3) possibility, incredibility, and utility; (4) possibility, incredibility, and disutility; (5) impossibility, incredibility, and disutility; (6) impossibility, incredibility, and utility; (7) impossibility, credibility, and utility; (8) impossibility, credibility, and disutility.

Whether an episode can or cannot be said to possess the quality of utility is properly a question pertaining to the art of poetry; whether it is possible or impossible, credible or incredible can be determined by reference to nature, to civil or moral law, or to some art other than the art of poetry. It therefore follows that, according to the principles laid down by Aristotle, an episode that does not benefit the plot is a greater fault in a poem than one that is either impossible or incredible. The reason may be that in poetry a fault is less grave the farther it is from being an offense against the poet's art and more grave if it offends against a principle closely related to poet's art or against the art itself.

To make myself clearer I will offer a few examples. We have seen that Medea's murder of Absyrtus is both possible and credible, for Medea is not only pitiless, but is also entrapped in a situation in which she can save her own life and Jason's only by Absyrtus' death. It also benefits the plot, for thanks to that death the plot has its resolution in the deliverance of Medea by an action at once singular and horrible. Next, it is possible that Saladin should keep at court a necromancer capable, in the opinion of the populace, of conveying a person in the space of one night from Alexandria to Pavia. Hence Boccaccio (*Dec.* 10. 9) says: "Messer Torello, who believed Saladin's words and had often heard that the thing was possible and had been done many times, began to take heart." It is also credible that loving Torello as he did Saladin should have commanded the necromancer to convey him there. But the episode does not benefit every part of the story, vitiating, as it does, and rendering less probable Saladin's secret travels in the guise of a merchant through the West. For, knowing that Saladin had at his side a necromancer able to convey men great distances in a short space of time, one might well ask why he chose to absent himself from his kingdom for so long and to court the hardships and the palpable risks of so long a journey when he might have been transported effortlessly in a single night to whatever country he chose, have seen what he desired to see, and have returned to his palace on the following night. The incident likewise vitiates and renders less probable the invitation so cordially extended by Saladin to Torello to return for at least one more visit while he, Saladin, was alive; for it prompts one to ask why, with a necromancer at his command, Saladin should not have Torello brought back to him as often as he chooses without exertion on Torello's part. Again, it is possible that Menelaus should prefer helping Tyndareus, his father-in-law, avenge Clytaemnestra's death to helping Orestes, his nephew, escape from Tyndareus' hands. But no one can believe that he ought to have done so, and the baseness

of his choice has been condemned by Aristotle in an earlier passage and will be again in a later one. Though not very credible, that choice is yet indispensable to the plot, for if Menelaus had done the credible thing and had sided with Orestes, the poet could never have composed a plot for his tragedy. Further, in the opinion of some, Aeneas's ships could not have been metamorphosed into nymphs at a time when they were little more than decaying timber; on the other hand it is credible that Cybele should have chosen to confer this honor upon them, for the timber had once grown in a forest sacred to her on Mount Ida.⁵ Yet the metamorphosis does not really benefit the plot; as we have already shown it is no integral part either of its complication or resolution and is altogether otiose. Finally it is impossible that Virgil should have left Limbo for a stay in Giudecca during the war between Caesar and Pompey, for he was then still living and consequently not in Limbo; but if not possible that stay was credible, for thanks to it the Divine Justice was not defrauded of its due for the time that the soldier's soul was restored to its body by Erichtho. It was also of some benefit to the plot, for the descent to the lowermost circle in Hell enabled Virgil to acquire by experience the knowledge necessary to serve as Dante's guide.

I will not offer examples of the remaining combinations, since enough has been said to enable the reader to find his own without difficulty. I will only add that episodes which do not benefit the plot are of two kinds; the injurious and the otiose. An example of the injurious is found in the story of Torello, for, as we have shown, the manner of Torello's return to Pavia vitiates certain other parts of the story; examples of the otiose are the metamorphosis of Aeneas' ships into nymphs and of Cupid into Ascanius, neither of which either injures or benefits the plot.

4b

The Improbable

[2.192] It is an error to make plots out of improbable parts.... Plots must not only not be constituted wholly or in part of improbable parts...; all improbabilities must be excluded from them as far as possible. But if the inclusion of some improbability is unavoidable it should not be made an integral part of the plot or the spectacle.¹ Thus tragic and also epic poets must guard against two faults or a single fault composed of two, viz., the inclusion in their poems of one improbable incident or of more than one. If a poem contains more than one there seems to be no way of making their presence tolerable; if only one it can be made tolerable by not being made an integral part of the plot or the spectacle.... The incidents of which Aristotle speaks are comprised under the three heads we have already proposed, for if they are absurd that is because they are impossible, incredible, or of no benefit to the plot....

[2.193] Aristotle offers three examples of improbabilities made tolerable by being excluded from the plot or the spectacle. The first is from the *Oedipus the King* of Sophocles. When Oedipus becomes king of Thebes and the husband of Jocasta, who has been widowed by the death of Laius, he omits to make instant inquiries into the manner of Laius' death, deferring them until the day, many years later, when they bring him the knowledge that he had slain his father and married his mother. Oedipus' remissness is an improbability, but in Sophocles it is made tolerable by not being present either in the plot or the spectacle, though it is assumed to be in the background by the discerning reader or spectator. If, on the other hand, we actually saw Oedipus arriving in Thebes and subsequently becoming king of Thebes and Jocasta's husband without ever inquiring into the manner of his predecessor's death, the improbability would be more conspicuous than it is in Sophocles' tragedy.... The second example is from the *Electra* of Sophocles. Orestes, Pylades, and the Paedagogus, who appear in Argos for the ostensible purpose of bringing Orestes' ashes home, could not possibly have been the first to bring news of the Pythian games to that city. Yet to judge by the behavior of Electra and Clytaemnestra upon their arrival, the death of Orestes could not have been so much as mentioned by the Argives who had already returned from the Pythian games and reported what had happened there. Their silence is an improbability (I call it that because it renders the events immediately following the arrival of Orestes, Pylades, and the Paedagogus improbable), but it is no part of the spectacle and for that reason is not intolerable. The third example is from a tragedy which must have told how Telephus came almost to consummate his marriage to his mother. To bring out as clearly as may be the improbable element in this tragedy I will offer what I imagine to have been its argument. Auge, daughter of Aleus, is made pregnant of Telephus by Hercules. Soon after the infant's birth she exposes him on Mount Parthenius, and in fear of her father flees to Teuthras, the childless king of Mysias, who adopts her. Years later Telephus, now a man of martial prowess, finds himself in Teuthras' country at a time when Idas, the son of Aphareus, is waging war against him to dispossess him of his kingdom. Telephus becomes Teuthras' ally under a compact that if he delivers him from Idas Teuthras will give him his daughter in marriage without delay and his kingdom as dowry at his death. Telephus defeats Idas, and the nuptials are celebrated. But before the marriage is consummated man and wife recognize each other as mother and son. Aristotle's words, "He came without uttering a word from Tegea to Mysia," seem to indicate that in the recognition scene the dialogue proceeds on the assumption that Teuthras has never asked Telephus what country he had come from and that on his way from Tegea to Mysia Telephus had quite lost his powers of speech and had therefore been unable to answer questions. This part of the story is an improbability, but it is tolerable for the same reason that the improbable has been found tolerable in the other two tragedies: because it forms no part of the spectacle.

To understand this matter fully we will consider a number of typical situations. (1) Some things are done at the right time and then again at the wrong

time. Let us assume, for instance, that upon his elevation to the dignity of the throne and the royal bed Oedipus had inquired into the manner of Laius' death. In that case his inquiries would have been made at the proper time. The inquiries were repeated some twenty years later, when he was about to learn that he was the son of Laius and Jocasta. But now they are made at the wrong time, so that they constitute a first fault because of their inopportune timing and a second, that of superfluity, because they are no more than repetitions of earlier inquiries. (2) Some things not done at the right time are then done at the wrong time. Oedipus, for instance, did not inquire into the manner of Laius' death when he became king of Thebes and Jocasta's husband. If he had, his inquiries would have been made at the proper time. He did inquire into the matter many years later, but at the wrong time. His failure to make proper inquiries at the right time constitutes a fault on two counts, for he neglected both to make the inquiries and to make them at the proper time. On the other hand the inquiries he made at a later date constitute a fault only on one count, that of inopportune timing. (3) Some things are done at the right time and in good faith, and again at the wrong time and with intent to deceive. Thus let us assume that the first Argives to return home from the Pythian games gave a true account of what they had seen. Of them we may say that they gave their account at the right time and that it accorded with the facts. Some days later three others, the Paedagogus, Pylades, and Orestes, arrived in Argos concealing their identity. Professing to have just returned from the Pythian games they gave a second account of what had happened there, but a false one, for they reported that Orestes had been killed in the chariot race. Of them we may say that they gave their account at the wrong time and that it falsified the facts. Because they repeated a story that had already been told, and told it at the wrong time and in a version at variance with the facts, their action is to be condemned on three counts: as superfluous, inopportune, and false. (4) Some things are not done at the right time, though if they had been they would have been done in good faith, but are done at the wrong time and with intent to deceive. Thus the first Argives to return home from the Pythian games, who should have told what had happened there, failed to do so and consequently failed to speak the truth. These men may be condemned on three counts: for failing to speak, for failing to speak opportunely, and for failing to speak the truth. The others, who came several days later, professed to report what had happened but actually offered a fabrication. Coming, as it does, at the wrong time, their recital constitutes a fault for its inopportune timing; on the other hand it cannot be condemned as either superfluous or false, since it does not repeat an earlier report and there is no earlier report by which it could be refuted.

Let us now consider the same situations not as imagined but as seen upon the stage. (1) If the first things that should be done are represented on the stage as done at the right time, and the second, which are like them in nature, as done at the wrong time, the second would be marred by two faults, inopportune timing and superfluity. (2) If the first things are not done, and that fact is apparent to the audience, the audience would be aware of two faults: failure

to act at the right time and failure to act at all. The second things would be seen as marred by only one: inopportune timing. (3) If the first things are represented as done at the right time and in good faith and the second at the wrong time and with intent to deceive, the second would be marred by three faults, being superfluous, inopportune, and false. (4) If the first things that might have been done, and in good faith, are not done, and that fact is apparent to the audience, the audience would be aware of three faults, failure to act at the right time, failure to act at all, and failure to bear witness to the truth; the second would be seen as marred by only one fault, inopportune timing. On the other hand, if the first things, whether like or unlike the second in their conformity to the truth, are not done, and that fact is not apparent to the audience, the second would be seen as marred by only one fault, inopportune timing, but none of the three that mar the first things would be apparent to the audience. These considerations, which have brought forth the full meaning of Aristotle's examples, demonstrate how much more tolerable is the improbability that is not represented on the stage than the one that is.

Now what has been said about the improbable in tragedy—that it is conspicuous on-stage and unnoticeable off-stage—may be repeated for epic poetry. If Homer, for example, had plainly said that as the Greeks were advancing toward Troy for the first time and were approaching its walls Priam had stood on the very tower from which nine years later Helen was to point to and name the captains of the Greeks for him (*Il.* 3. 161ff.) and standing there had neglected to question Helen about them, the improbability of his omission would be conspicuous. But that possible scene is never so much as hinted at and the improbability remains hidden.

We have already considered why the report of Orestes' death in the *Electra* is, and is recognized by Aristotle to be, an improbability. But that report contains an absurdity within itself and one unrecognized by Aristotle, that Orestes' death occurred in the chariot race at the Pythian games, which was and was known to be an impossibility, since in Orestes' day the chariot race had not yet been introduced into those games. It had, however, by Sophocles' time, and this may have led Aristotle to suppose that Sophocles had legitimate grounds for advancing the race to an earlier date than history would countenance. In my opinion, however, Sophocles committed an offense against historical fact, and I also believe that the offense is not to be excused by an appeal to the figure known as anachronism, of which, since it is not invoked by Aristotle, I will say no more....

4c

The Improbable Made Tolerable

[2.199] Aristotle maintains (24. 60a 34–60b 5) that there are two kinds of plots containing improbable elements. The first consists of those in which the improbability is made tolerable only by the fact that if it were removed the plot

would collapse; the other of those in which it is tolerable for other reasons. And just as poets who insist upon composing plots of the first kind give us cause for laughter, so those who compose plots of the second kind cannot be forgiven the incongruity unless, like Homer, they cloak it with the mantle of other excellences. It must be borne in mind that the improbabilities with which Aristotle is concerned here are those components of the plot which have been described as impossible or incredible, not those which operate to injure the plot. Improbabilities of this last sort are intolerable and cannot be rendered tolerable by any known means, for they constitute offenses against the poet's own art. Impossible and incredible episodes, on the other hand, may be made tolerable in a number of ways, the two most important being that they be counterbalanced by a large number of excellences elsewhere in the poem and that the incredible part be accompanied by other than incredible elements and its language be of such splendor that it will attract the reader's attention to itself and away from the incredible. The episode, for instance, in which the Phaeacians conveyed Ulysses asleep from Corfu to the shores of Ithaca (*Od.* 13. 63ff.), would not be tolerable if it were not adorned by and seasoned with other excellences. On the other hand we must condemn as incredible and impossible the episode in Virgil (*Aen.* 3. 5-6) in which the Trojans build a fleet of twenty ships below Antandrus at the foot of Mount Ida in Phrygia before the Greeks had departed from the Troad. The episode is quite intolerable because in telling it Virgil does not kill or sweeten the bitter taste of the absurd by seasoning his account of the action with delightful invention or beautiful language, but merely has Aeneas say,

We build a fleet
Below Antandrus and the hills of Phrygian Ida.

Now this building of Aeneas's fleet is useful to the plot; without it the *Aeneid*, which contains many other admirable episodes, could not have come into being. But the invention is quite incredible or, rather, quite impossible. Antandrus is very near Troy, and Troy at that time was occupied by the victorious, powerful, and innumerable soldiery of the Greeks, who had innumerable ships at their disposal. In the circumstances, with the Greeks knowing, as they indeed must have known, what he was about, how could Aeneas have built twenty ships large enough to hold and fit to convey the great multitude of his followers? Again, if Troy had been captured, looted, and burned, and most of its men slain or taken prisoner together with its women and children, where did Aeneas find enough shipwrights to build the ships? And if he found the shipwrights, where could he have found the axes, the saws, the hatchets, and the other necessary tools? And if he lacked neither shipwrights nor tools, who (since it requires more than timber to build a ship) could have supplied him with the necessary nails, pitch, oakum, and other materials? And where could he have found the ropes and sails and anchors and other equipment? Virgil's lines, as I have said, contain no embellishments to render this obviously incredible and impossible episode tolerable. But he might perhaps have made

it both possible and credible if he had said that Aeneas and his followers, having escaped from the fires of Troy and the swords of the Greeks, had hidden in the caves and caverns of Mount Ida until the Greek army had departed and then had built the fleet with the help of the gods or of other men.

* * * * *

[2.201] Aristotle proves with an example from Homer that an improbability which is part and parcel of the plot remains an improbability, and is recognized as such even though the rest of the plot is without fault, saying (24. 60a 35-60b1) that the improbabilities in that part of the *Odyssey* (13. 93ff.) where Ulysses is set ashore in his sleep in Ithaca would remain improbabilities and would be recognized as such and judged intolerable if they had been fashioned by a less discerning poet than Homer, i.e., if the episode had not been accompanied by many other excellences. In that episode we read that Ulysses is set ashore in his sleep in Ithaca, whither he had been conveyed by the sailors from Corfu, notwithstanding the fact that since he had fallen asleep as the ship set sail from that island and remained fast asleep throughout the voyage, his failure to be roused cannot be accounted for by the fact that he was in his first sleep. What is more, the sailors in question, who knew that Ulysses had received extraordinary honors from King Alcinous and his whole court, who had munificently showered precious gifts upon him, should not have been in such haste to sail back home that they could not remain in the harbor for the brief quarter of an hour it took him to awake so that they could have bidden him farewell. And those precious gifts should not have been left unguarded, as they were while Ulysses slept, and at the mercy of chance. To be sure they were carefully deposited at some distance from the highway, but the fact remains that upon waking Ulysses either could or could not have seen them at once. If he could, why could they not likewise have been seen and stolen by some wayfarer while Ulysses slept? If he could not, he would have reasonably imagined that the sailors had taken them back to Corfu to keep them for themselves, reporting to the king and the court that they had left them with him in Ithaca (which is also what he might have imagined if they had been stolen by some wayfarer), and he would have departed from the place without making further search, losing the gifts forever.

Some say in defense of Homer that his description of Ulysses' landing was given its present form for many valid reasons. They argue that if Ulysses had been awake he must in courtesy have bidden the crew to tarry and must have escorted them to his palace, not allowing them to set sail for home before he had thanked them and had duly and adequately rewarded them with gifts, and that he could not have done this without having first been publicly recognized by both his family and servants and the suitors. If he had been recognized one of two things would have resulted: either he would have been unable to avenge the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of the suitors and could not have slain them, or, if he had, he could not have done so in the manner which brought him such great glory, i.e., single-handedly or with the help of very few, and

at the time when his enemies least expected it. These critics therefore conclude that by choosing not to exclude this improbability from the plot and thereby not to rob the story of some of its beauty Homer chose the lesser of two evils.¹ It is certain, however, that this defense would not for a moment be considered valid by Aristotle, who clearly holds that the improbability is tolerable thanks only to the many excellences that counterbalance it, such as the descriptions of the beautiful harbor, the famous cave, and the rise of the morning star, as well as other passages of the same sort. Some other critic might join in the refutation of these apologists by asserting that though the latter books of the *Odyssey* are undeniably better served by a Ulysses that arrives on Ithaca as a stranger and avenges himself on his enemies single-handedly than by one who had been known as Ulysses from the first and had carried out his vengeance with the help of others, yet Homer, having quite appropriately adopted the first of these two versions of the story, should perhaps have cleared it of its improbability by inventing, say, a sleeping potion which would have been administered to Ulysses before the start of the voyage at the bidding of Alcinous or Arete. This device would have lent probability to the whole episode, and is indeed the device employed by Boccaccio in his story of Torello (*Dec.* 10. 9), who is administered such a potion at Saladin's bidding so that he may be conveyed in his sleep from Alexandria to Pavia and there set down asleep and with many precious gifts in the church of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro....

* * * * *

[2.206] Aristotle has already said that the heroic metre is suited to epic poetry because it is the most capacious of all metres and that to maintain its unrivalled capaciousness it is especially receptive to strange words and metaphors.² He now adds (24. 60b 2-5) that it must not always keep the same tenor and maintain itself at the same level of loftiness, but should sometimes humble itself and decline somewhat from its usual level, which it owes to the majestic and elaborately wrought style. That the epic poet may know definitely in what parts of his poem he should and in what parts he should not strive for elaborateness of style, Aristotle says that this quality is demanded by the parts of an epic poem that are actionless and not by those that are not, as, for instance, those that are not lacking in character and thought.... By "actionless parts" we are to understand those in which the poet speaks in his own person and describes the action in his own language. These parts are so called because they are not active like those that are represented on the stage and those in which the epic poet introduces his characters to speak. The latter are contrasted with the inactive because they seem almost suitable for representation on the stage. Their content is primarily thought and secondarily character.

* * * * *

[2.207] When the epic poet speaks in his own person he must handle the language with all the art at his command, for these parts of the poem are in-

active and the action in them is not seen except through the window of the poet's language. But when he puts words in another's mouth let him refrain from composing in the elaborately wrought and amplified style which he adopts when speaking in his own person. For just as a poet may put inappropriate sentiments in the mouths of his characters, a common fault for which, as we have said, Euripides has been blamed and praise has been withheld from Boccaccio (p. 169) as the author of the story of Ghismonda (*Dec.* 4. 1) so if he regularly composes in his personal style the language will quite frequently prove to be unsuited both to the character of the speaker and to his thoughts and for that reason it will obscure the beauty of the agent's thought and character, which manifest themselves fully only when they present themselves to the mind's eye through language that is natural and appropriate to them. This is a fault of which I have found many moderns guilty, and especially Francesco Maria Molza in certain sonnets in which the speaker is a shepherd.³

5

Nomenclature

[1.256] Aristotle has distinguished poetry from history by showing that poetry deals with what may happen and history with what has happened. From this distinction he has drawn the conclusion that poetry is more than history a thing for philosophers and men of discerning minds because things that may happen are universal whereas things that have happened are particular. (This matter we have discussed at sufficient length.) He now adds (8. 51b 8-26), as if it were a second conclusion, that the poetry which aims at representing the universal gives its characters names of the poet's choosing. This observation gives him the occasion for speaking of the choice of names for the characters of tragedy and comedy; but since he remains silent on the choice of names for the characters of epic and other types of poetry, and his observations on the names of tragic personages are perhaps less than satisfactory, it may be well for us to set forth our own opinions on this matter.

Generally speaking we group poems under four distinct heads, the first three being comedy, epic poetry, and tragedy, and the fourth odes, epigrams, elegies, *canzoni*, and other similar short poems of various kinds. In each of these four groups the kinds of names given to the characters differ from those given in the other three. In comedy, and especially the New Comedy, where the characters are not individuals but types, all the names are invented by the poet, for comedy has private affairs for its proper subject, and, as we have already shown (p. 95), the poet cannot as a result ever be accused of falsifying history or tradition. But in inventing names the comic poet should take note of the usages of the time and place in which the action is set, so that

if, for example, the place is Athens and the time its days as a pagan republic, he will give his characters no names but such as Chremes, Pamphilus, and Philumena, which were to be met with in the Athens of that time. This principle is faithfully observed by Boccaccio, who gives the characters in his stories only names in use in the countries from which they came and the times in which they lived. (The names of the seven ladies and the three youths who tell the stories will be considered below.) It is well to note, however, that even in comedy, abstractions are personified and, like Wealth and Poverty in Aristophanes' *Plutus*, are introduced to speak under their own names.

In epic poetry, which deals with what has happened in so far as it utilizes an action known in summary form and with what may happen in so far as it invents, in lieu of what the received story does not report, the particulars with which the story in question is expanded and completed, the poet gives to some of his characters the names that have been transmitted by history or tradition and to others names of his own choice. And since an epic action is a royal action and we should not recognize it as such if we did not know the king of whom it is reported, the names of the king and of the persons whom we know from history or tradition to have been his familiars or to have participated in the action are historical; if it were otherwise the narrative would be found incredible because of the violence it would do to well-established historical truth. The names of the other characters are invented, especially if they are persons whose names are not as a rule recorded in the book of fame. In inventing these names, however, the poet is bound to show the same regard for the time and place in which the action is set as when he invents the names of comic characters. Of names of this sort in epic poetry Aristotle makes no mention. As for personifications, the epic poet enjoys the privilege of personifying abstract and invisible things; Rumor retains its own name in Virgil (*Aen.* 173ff.) and Rumor and Famine retain theirs in Ovid (*Met.* 9. 136ff.; 12. 39ff.). One difference in the use of proper names separates Homer from Virgil. In his catalogue of ships (*Il.* 2. 484ff.) Homer names no captain who is not known through history or tradition, whereas in his catalogue of forces (*Aen.* 7. 641ff.) Virgil gives to all but a few of his captains names of his own invention. In another matter they follow a parallel course, though they are not both to be accorded the same measure of praise. In Homer the captains of the Greeks and the Trojans call one another by name; but these men had been locked in battle for nine consecutive years, and since during the many truces the Greeks had entered Troy and mingled with the Trojans while the Trojans had left their city and mingled with the Greek host, it is highly probable that the captains and even the common soldiers on the two sides should have known one another not only by sight but by name and in every other way. Virgil follows Homer's precedent and represents the captains of the Trojan and Rutulian armies speaking to one another and calling one another by name, though they were total strangers to one another and perhaps none of them understood any language but his own. In these circumstances communication is highly improbable, for if, as Palamedes attests in Gorgias' defense of him, the Greeks in the early days of the war could not communicate with

the Trojans except through interpreters,¹ how much less likely that Trojans and Rutulians, whose languages were more diverse than the Trojan and the Greek, should have found it possible to dispense with interpreters from the first! ... But Homer too is guilty of an offense against verisimilitude when he represents Priam on a tower (*Il.* 3. 161ff.) requesting Helen to name for him a number of the Greek captains in the plain below; for it is reasonable to suppose that he must by that late day have known the names of the very men who had more than once visited Troy for a variety of reasons and had often conducted negotiations with him whether to ransom prisoners, to arrange a truce for burying the dead, to propose conditions for an accord and an end to the war, or to secure other ends of the same kind, and that he himself had by then visited the Greek camp for similar reasons or at least had long before then on that same tower or another have requested Helen or some other person to point out and name his chiefs of the enemy forces.

In tragedy, as we have said, characters are given the names by which they are known in history or tradition, for tragedy represents royal actions, and its characters are historical personages whose names could not be changed without incurring censure for deliberately contradicting history. And if it is found necessary to introduce persons unknown to history or tradition, they are not given proper names but are named after their calling, as Servant, Nurse, Messenger, Herald, Priest, etc. (An exception is made when a person of this kind is known in history by his own name or otherwise: Talthybius, for instance, a famous Greek herald, appears under his own name in the *Hecuba* of Euripides.) The reason is that noblemen and kings never call their servants and the members of their households otherwise than by the name of their office, as Secretary, Chamberlain, Seneschal, Palfrenier, and the like. This practice is followed by the tragic poets to lend probability to the dialogue; it is, however, ignored by the epic poets, who because they tell their stories in the first person may without violence to verisimilitude give such characters names of their own invention. Hence Aristotle falls into error when he asserts that in any tragedy² all but one or two names are fictitious, for all the names in a tragedy are historical, and if the poet on occasion finds it necessary to invent one, he does not really invent it, but identifies the nameless character with the name of his office. And he falls into even graver error—one of which we have spoken and shall speak again—when he asserts that the tragic poet is at liberty to invent the whole action and all the names. Finally tragedy may personify abstract and invisible entities and introduce them under their own names, as Power and Force are so introduced in the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus.

The last class of poems of which we shall speak are odes, epigrams, elegies, sonnets, *canzoni*, and the like, where persons are commonly introduced under their true names. But there are reasons why in these poems too a fictitious name is sometimes used in place of the true one, as (1) when the poet fears that he may bring disgrace upon some one whom he represents as saying or doing what is not generally considered honorable; (2) when he fears that a person would regard being named as an insult; (3) and when he feels that the

fictitious name is more descriptive than the true one of the virtue or vice for which the subject is praised or blamed.

(1) Examples of the first kind are many. A notable one is to be found in the opening pages of the first story in the *Decameron*, where the seven ladies introduced to exchange stories are given names of Boccaccio's invention. The author justifies his procedure thus: "I should willingly give the true names of these ladies were I not restrained by a just cause, namely, that I would not create the occasion for any of them on some future day to feel shame for the things they here tell and lend ear to; for in these days the laws governing the pursuit of pleasure are somewhat strict, whereas in their day, for the reasons already given, they were extremely liberal not only for the young but for those of much riper years. Nor would I give the envious, who are ever ready to censure every praiseworthy life, a cause for defaming in any way these worthy ladies by their unseemly talk." And the better to conceal the names of the seven ladies Boccaccio also gave fictitious names to the three youths who shared their pleasures as well as to the serving-men and waiting-women. For this reason poets commonly give their mistresses names other than their own. Ovid, for instance, sings of a Corinna, Propertius of a Cynthia, Catullus of a Lesbia, and Tibullus of a Delia. When false names are used for this reason the poet does not observe the rule which we have shown should be observed by the writers of comedies and epic poems, that of giving their characters only names met with in the country and the age in which the action is set. Corinna, Cynthia, Lesbia, and Delia, for instance, are not names of the sort given to Roman women at the time our poets flourished; nor do the names which Boccaccio gives to the seven ladies, the three youths, and the serving-men and waiting-women accord with the Florentine usage of their time. What poets in these circumstances seek is the significant name or the name of a person who is in some or in all respects like the person about whom they write. Hence Boccaccio continues: "Therefore so that the words of these ladies may hereafter, when read, cause them no embarrassment, I propose to give each a name that is more or less descriptive of her character."

But some one may ask why the Greek and Latin poets never sought inventions for the praise of their mistresses in the etymologies and meanings of their names even when these offered them many opportunities for such play (as the name of Cynthia did to Propertius and that of Delia to Tibullus), whereas our poets in the vulgar tongue keep the meanings of their ladies' names constantly before them, and none more than Petrarch, who from the name Laura extracts a thousand inventions for his sonnets and *canzoni*. Our answer will seem to do little credit to our poets, yet since it may be the correct one we will not refrain from giving it: it is that Greek and Latin poets despised the practice as a frivolous game smacking of the plebeian more than of the aristocratic, the kind of thing indulged in by men, Martial among them, whose inventive powers are known to have been feeble and far from exalted. Hence Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 5. 10. 30-31) says: "A person's name is also considered an accident from which arguments may be drawn; but it seldom supplies them unless it has been conferred for some special reason, as have appellations like

Wise, Great, and Pious, or has inspired some thought in its bearer. Thus it inspired the thought of conspiracy in the mind of Lentulus, who knowing on the authority of the Sibylline books and the responses of the soothsayers that dominion should be conferred upon three Cornelii, came to believe that he was the third in the line of Sulla and Cinna because his name too was Cornelius. On the other hand Euripides was far from inspired when he had Polynices' brother take the meaning of his name as a manifestation of his character. Yet names frequently supply matter for jests, and Cicero used Verres' name for this purpose more than once." Plays on names seem neither so contemptible nor so ineffectual in our language thanks to the graceful style with which they have been invested, especially by Petrarch, or to some property of our language so far unperceived and unrecognized.

(2) Fictitious names are given to persons who have the power to avenge themselves if they resent being called by their real names. Persius, for instance, desiring to denounce the Emperor Nero as a fool wrote only, "King Midas has ass's ears;"³ and the same Nero was called a lion by St. Paul (2 Tim. 4. 17), who to denounce him for his ferocity and cruelty said of himself that he had been delivered from the lion's mouth.

(3) Fictitious names are preferred to the true ones because of their meaning. Many examples of this are to be found in poets who give the name of Zoilus or Momus⁴ to their severest critics and that of Venus to their mistresses.

I shall now retrace my steps and elaborate on some of the observations just made. I have said that the poet may and should give fictitious names to persons whom he wishes to shield from the disgrace that his account of their words and deeds might bring upon them, adding that he is not obliged to go for these names to the time and place in which those persons lived when by so doing he might easily bring disgrace upon others. In the days of the Roman ladies we have referred to, for instance, women were given family names like Clodia, Hostia, and Plania, these being, as Apuleius tells us in the first speech in his *Apologia* (10), the real names of Lesbia, Cynthia, and Delia. Now if our poets had chosen for these ladies not Greek but Roman names and had called them Julia, Portia, and Terentia, the women bearing these family names would have felt injured and would have been disgraced before the world as the authors of the shameful deeds imputed to others. But where such confusion is out of the question, I see no reason why the poet should not give his characters names in common use and so achieve a higher degree of verisimilitude. The *Decameron*, for instance, would have gained in verisimilitude if Boccaccio, who had no cause for fearing damaging consequences, had given his seven ladies names like Francesca and Giovanna, which were common in the Florence of their day, instead of resorting to Greek names or to such as had a strange ring in the ears of his contemporaries, for the former names could not have exposed the true identity of the ladies more easily than the latter. Boccaccio may have been misled by the example of the Latin poets, failing to see the considerations which led them to give their mistresses Greek rather than Latin names. Let me also add that when a poet gives his mistress a fictitious name for the reason we have just considered he should choose one

that can be replaced by the real name without injury to the metre. The names Lesbia, Cynthia, Delia, and Perilla correspond in the number and quantities of their syllables to Clodia, Hostia, Plania, and Metella, so that Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, and Tigidas, who sang of them, could when they so desired substitute the real names for the fictitious without injury to the metre. This may have been the reason why they refrained from playing upon these names and using them as sources of their inventions, for these inventions would have become nonsensical when the real names were substituted for the false....

Part VI

The Defense of Poets

I

Three Defensible Objects of Imitation

[2.213] Aristotle here initiates his effort to devise arguments by which poets may be defended against those who charge them with error, asserting (25. 60b 8-11) that things may be laudably imitated in various ways: "as they were or are, as they are said or thought to be, or as they ought to be." In support of this assertion he points to the example of painters or other makers of figures whether of bronze, brass, iron, marble, clay, ivory, wood, wax, or other medium. These artificers can practice their art only by imitating one of the objects named above,¹ and since the poet is like them an imitator it follows that he can practice his art only by imitating some one of those same objects.

At this point we must pause to consider two matters. The first is that Aristotle's list of objects imitable by the above artificers is perhaps incomplete; the second that the classification of poetry with painting and sculpture because it shares with them the same objects of imitation seems to be unacceptable.

Aristotle's list would have been more nearly exhaustive if he had understood that of imitable objects some are real and some imaginary. The real are divisible into three kinds. (1) Some objects are real for the painter as he imitates them and for us as we contemplate his imitation. Thus the Emperor Charles V was real for Titian as he painted him, and we accept Titian's representation of him as a faithful likeness. (2) Some objects are not real for the painter as he imitates them, but are real for us as we contemplate the imitation. Thus the foam on the mouth of the Emperor's horse was not real for the painter, for we can be certain that no image of it had taken shape in his mind when, furious with himself and the art of painting, he flung a sponge at the painting to disfigure it but actually improved and perfected it, producing by miraculous chance a spot that we readily accept as a representation of real foam.² (3) Some objects are real for the painter as he imitates them but not for us in his imitation. Thus if a painter should paint some monster that has appeared before him, we would take his painting to be the imitation of an imaginary creature because monsters of its kind are never seen.

Imaginary objects that may be imitated by painting and its sister-arts are of two kinds: (1) those imagined by others and appropriated as they are by the painter and (2) those imagined by the painter and never appropriated from

anyone else. If of the first kind, they owe their being either to legend more than any other factor, as do the Chimera, Scylla, and other supernatural monsters, or to popular belief more than to legend or other factor, as does the generally held belief that God the Father has the form of a rather elderly man with a countenance of reverend and commanding majesty; if of the second kind, they sometimes embody a species rather than an individual, as a generalized male figure rather than this or that man, sometimes more than one species, combining a part of one species and one of another, as Horace does in creating the monster described in the opening lines of his *Ars Poetica*. I refrain from speaking of objects which are bodiless and invisible and which the painter imagines with visible bodies and so paints them, for they are of one or another kind of the visible objects just described, which, as can be plainly seen, add up to more than the three named by Aristotle.

Now according to Aristotle poetry always imitates one of the three objects named by him because one of them is at all times the object imitated by painting and the other arts employed in the production of images. This seems to us not to be true in an absolute sense, for poetry may be considered in three ways, according as it chooses to imitate a royal subject or the particulars which flesh out that royal subject or a humble subject and the particulars that flesh it out. If it chooses to imitate a royal subject, it cannot imitate it in Aristotle's third manner, i.e. as it ought to be, but only as it was or is, or as it is said or is thought to be. The reason for this has already been given: a poet cannot legitimately invent royal actions or legitimately alter the accounts of such actions transmitted by history or tradition or the versions of them current among the common people. On the other hand not all royal actions are suitable subjects for poetry but only those which history or tradition has transmitted in summary form and not in detail, a limitation which works to save the poet from deviating from history or tradition in so far as he adheres to what they report about the actions of his royal personages and at the same time gives him a free hand to exercise his peculiar function in so far as he invents such particulars as serve the poetic ends it has in view, for then neither history nor tradition can produce evidence that can convict him of straying from the truth.

With the actions of royalty I would classify the actions of the gods. These are of two kinds, which I will call manifest and hidden.³ Manifest divine actions are like royal actions in that they may be made into a proper poem only if they are known in summary form through history or tradition. The poet is not free to invent new miraculous actions of this kind, nor yet to contradict what history or tradition reports of them or to alter them in any wise. Hidden divine actions, on the other hand, may be invented by the poet and treated in whatever manner will serve him best. To make my meaning clear I will offer two definitions. I call a miraculous divine action "manifest" when we know from history or tradition that it had its origin in a god, as we know from tradition that Bacchus transformed the Tuscan mariners into dolphins.⁴ I call such an action "hidden" when though recognizable by its visible effects as transcending ordinary human actions it is not clearly known to have had a

god for its author, but is nevertheless attributed to some god by devout men who consider the magnitude of those effects, and to the particular god who might plausibly have been moved to act by some honor or dishonor done or about to be done to him. Thus a person considering that upon his arrival in Italy from Troy, whence he had been expelled with a band of followers too small for great undertakings, Aeneas is offered a royal spouse with a part of the Kingdom of Italy as dowry and that most of the Italian princes league themselves with him to their own detriment and abasement and to his advantage and elevation—a person considering all this will conclude that it must be the work of some god, more particularly of a god who had been honored and revered by Aeneas or his forebears in the past or will be honored and revered by him or his progeny in times to come. Therefore, with these successes in mind, Virgil assigns to some gods the role of protecting Aeneas and defending him from other gods seeking ways to injure him and prevent him both from landing in Italy and conquering it, and he shapes and relates their miraculous actions in the manner that seems to him best suited to the circumstances, though no report of them had been transmitted either by history or tradition. In like manner, seeing that the Roman Empire had been the proximate cause of the Pope's glorious dominion over the world, Dante has it that God [who, as he thought, took joy and satisfaction in the Pope's grandeur and exaltation], unbent, as it were, to a somewhat less strict exercise of his inexorable justice for the greater glory that would redound to Himself from an exalted Papacy and permitted the liberties of Republican Rome to be stifled by the Emperor so that the sum of those augmented powers might be more expeditiously transmitted to the Pope; [for Dante could not bring himself to believe that the Republic could without external constraint have brought itself so to despise its liberties as to willingly enslave itself to a priest.]⁵

It therefore appears that many poets have erred in inventing and attributing to certain gods actions of the kind we call manifest. We must believe, for instance, that the metamorphosis of Aeneas' ships into nymphs (*Aen.* 9. 69ff.) is to be condemned, for it is the invention of Virgil, and no hint of it ever reached him either through history or tradition. Nor can we believe that the metamorphosis of certain nymphs into willows, an invention of Giacompo Sannazaro (*Ecloga* 6), is a miracle of the kind to be approved in poetry; and the same holds for the miracle invented by Girolamo Fracastoro in which a fisherman in Lake Garda is transformed by Saturn into a carp.⁶ It is also to be noted that in so far as an author recounts the actions of kings and the miraculous actions of gods that he has received from history or tradition he is not an imitator and therefore not a poet, as—to return to a principle already established—he is not a poet when he composes a history in verse. On the other hand he is an imitator and therefore a poet when he invents miraculous divine actions of the kind we have called hidden, when he supplies the particulars absent in a narrative received in summary form from history or tradition or expands its compressed incidents, and when he invents actions about private persons whether in summary and compressed form or in expanded form and with all the necessary particulars. Thus the poet *qua* poet is the inventor

of the hidden miraculous actions of the gods, of the particulars of the known actions of kings, and of both the general design and the particulars of the actions involving private persons; which is to say that he is not an inventor when dealing with the first two objects of imitation enumerated by Aristotle (things as they were or are and things as they are said or are thought to be) but only when dealing with the third, i.e., with things as they ought to be. A thing is considered as it "ought to be" only with reference to the plot, as it tends to make it more beautiful and more marvelous. It is true that in fleshing out his imitative or poetic invention the poet cannot but make use, though as means to an end, of many things which fall under the first two heads and which he is forbidden to alter. But those things are not held to be imitated and do not constitute an essential part of the poet's art; they are used by the poet exactly as he finds them to flesh out the poem he has conceived. Thus the builder of a house takes his brick, mortar, and wooden doors, cabinets, etc. from the several arts that produce them and uses them in the form in which he receives them to give body to his conception of a house. He is not a maker of the things he has received from others but a maker of houses, and for that reason he is given the name of builder and not that of woodworker or other artisan. But the poet differs from the builder in this, that he invents not only the whole plot, i.e., its general design and the disposition of its parts, but also some of the particulars which give it body, not borrowing all of them from others, whereas the builder depends upon others for all he needs to realize his conception of the house as a whole and of the disposition of its parts.

To know which things the poet is obliged to borrow as they were or are, or as they are said or thought to be, and which he is free to imagine as they ought to be, we must draw a few distinctions. Some things are produced by nature and some are not.⁷ Those that are may be divided into the permanent (seas, mountains, islands, and rivers), the quasi-permanent (certain islands that have sunk under the sea and certain mountains that have been swallowed up by the earth), and the transitory (trees, animals, and stones); those that are not may be divided into the quasi-permanent (cities and religions) and the transitory (houses, families, and the actions of men). Now some of the latter things, be they quasi-permanent or transitory, have been consecrated to eternity by history or tradition, as have also some quasi-permanent or transitory works of nature. And because they have been so consecrated they must be held to be permanent, and the poet is obliged to use them exactly as they are known through history or tradition, in the manner in which he may make use of permanent works of nature, without altering them in any wise. When handling matters of this kind the poet must guard against falling into errors like the religious error committed by Ariosto in his *Orlando Furioso*, where he has Ricciardetto, a Christian, persuade Fiordispina, a Mohammedan, that he had been transformed from a woman into a man by a fairy as a reward for having released her from a trap laid by a faun who purposed to devour her alive.⁸ This episode is to be rejected as unreal because fairies and fauns are not believed in by either Christians or Mohammedans, and pagans do not believe in fairies nor yet in fauns that devour women or goddesses alive or dead. And it is ex-

tremely unlikely that a mortal could release anyone from a trap which had been laid by a supernatural being and from which a fairy had been unable to extricate herself even though she possessed the superhuman power of transforming a woman into a man.

Thus both painting and its sister-arts imitate things true and untrue, the untrue being of two kinds, things as they are said or thought to be and things as they ought to be. In so far as these arts imitate things as they were or are, however, they resemble history and not poetry, which cannot appropriately imitate the true. Nor do they resemble poetry in so far as they imitate things as they are said or thought to be, for poetry imitates these objects as it does the true, borrowing rather than inventing them by its own efforts, so that whether they are true or not signifies nothing, since the poet sustains no more labor and exercises his genius no more strenuously in imitating objects of this kind than in imitating what is true. On the other hand it can be truly said that poetry and painting are alike in that they both imitate what ought to be, provided we take pains to understand the exact nature of this common area of imitation, observing that though both may represent their objects as they ought to be, the object represented by painting is, say, a *man* of saintly life, whereas that represented by poetry is a *plot* and a *human action*. And it is to be borne in mind that the imitation of a human action as it ought to be, which is rated first among poetic imitations and commands more admiration than any other, is rated last among pictorial imitations, where it is known as a *history*, and is not admired at all. Painters who are conscious of their small worth seek to win and hold their viewers with a captivating history, whereas great painters simply paint every detail of their likenesses skilfully and naturally, holding their viewers with the artistry plainly discernible even in so small a part of a figure as a hand or a foot. On the other hand the imitation of objects as they are or once were or of borrowed matter, which is refused a place in poetry, is not only not refused a place in painting, but is greatly admired there and is rated above the imitation of what is said or is thought to be and of what ought to be. The reason for this has already been given (I. 14).

It would perhaps be well if we could bring ourselves to believe first that the three objects of imitation under consideration are not to be taken as objects of the kind of imitation proper to poetry, the imitation which poets employ in fashioning a plot and in representing a possible human action, but rather as objects of a kind of imitation that is adventitious to poetry, consisting in the borrowing of various things to supplement the genuinely poetic matter that we have considered, and secondly that the poet is granted not only the privilege of borrowing these things to supplement his genuinely poetic matter but the additional one of transforming them into what they ought to be. I say this because when he comes to distinguish between errors in the art of poetry and errors in the other arts Aristotle will speak (25. 60b 13-32) of the kind of imitation that is properly and primarily the poet's, whereas in the passage we are discussing he is concerned, as we shall see, with a type of imitation which is the poet's only adventitiously. It is also to be added that on a later page Aristotle will add two new types of imitation to the three already

named. The first (25. 60b 36) is the "accidental" imitation of things as they are. We have already offered an example of it in painting, telling how the angry painter flung a sponge at his canvas to disfigure it but produced instead an excellent representation of the foam about the horse's mouth. An example of it in poetry may be found in Seneca's *Medea* (375-79), where the chorus in one of its odes accidentally hits upon the discovery of the New World, which did not actually occur until our own age. The second (25. 61a 2) is the imitation of things "in forms customary in an earlier time," the evidence that they were indeed customary being their survival in some locality down to our own day. Thus if we should assert on the evidence of its past and present vogue in Italy that the type of cloak which we call the Spanish cape was once worn by Roman troops on the field of battle, our reasoning would not have betrayed us into historical error; and that conclusion could receive additional support from the figures of soldiers wearing capes of this cut on the marble triumphal arch of the Emperor Severus in Rome....

2

Acceptable and Unacceptable Errors

[2.226] The three ways described in the last section of answering some criticisms that may be leveled against a poem...are all alike in that they deny that the poem is faulty and defend what the poet has done as permissible and praiseworthy. The defenses of the three errors considered in this section are not alike in denying that an error has been committed; they freely admit the presence of error, but they undertake to show that it is an error in some art other than the art of poetry or that it is the result of an accident or that it is of benefit to the poem, for thanks to it the poem has succeeded, as it otherwise might not have, in accomplishing the thing it was designed to do.

Now many learned and famous men of both these and earlier times have insisted that the poet should be profoundly learned in all the arts and sciences and that without a full knowledge of them no one can be a true poet.¹ This is an opinion which, if we may judge by the passage we are considering, Aristotle is far from sharing; for if he holds that what is right or wrong in the art of poetry must not be confused with what is right or wrong in every other art and that therefore the poet must not be blamed for errors in arts other than his own, it follows that in his opinion a poem may be perfect and praiseworthy though the poet may not possess an extensive or even a moderate knowledge of the arts and sciences.

[2.227] Aristotle holds (25. 60b 13-15) that "correctness in the art of poetry is not the same thing as correctness in [the art of] politics or any other art." These words seem to be aimed at those of his contemporaries (ridiculed, if memory serves me, by Socrates in Plato's *Ion*)² who saw poetry as a depository of political doctrine. Now a city may be said to be "correctly" governed when its magistrates have succeeded in delivering it from every domestic and foreign menace to its well-being, in establishing concord among its citizens and peace with its neighbors, and in securing for the citizenry all things necessary for a happy, moral, and honorable life; a poem, on the other hand, has been "correctly" made when it imitates with metrical language a possible human action that pleases by the novelty of its plot. What is more, the two arts have different ends: the government of a city contemplates peace and concord among its citizens to the end that their life together may be conducted with greater ease and bring them greater material and spiritual benefits; poetry contemplates no more than the pleasure and recreation of its audiences. By this I do not deny that poetry is an art which, like many others, is subordinate to the city's political regimen as to an architectonic art. All I mean is that since correctness in politics or any other art is not the same thing as correctness in poetry, an error in the former arts cannot at all reasonably be imputed to the art of poetry, just as, conversely, an error in the art of poetry should not be imputed to any of the other arts. Yet in so far as poetry is subordinate to the art of government and is used by it as an instrument to attain its own end, errors in the art of poetry are imputed to that art. That being so, public magistrates in the cities take care to forbid the performance of tragedies and comedies and the recitation of epic poems which may not only corrupt or injure by their shows of lewdness or other means the city's severe and divinely sanctioned moral customs but may also fall short of the artistic correctness necessary for attaining the poetic ends they have in view. And on the assumption that it is a matter of no small consequence to the citizenry that the art of poetry be well formulated and properly practiced, they offer public prizes and titles of great honor to exemplary poets. Hence the laurel crowns which in modern times are conferred in solemn ceremonies by emperors and popes upon poets in recognition of their impeccable practice of their art.³ For this reason it should appear neither unreasonable nor strange that errors in matters both within and without the realm of the arts and sciences, matters without which the art of poetry can never fashion its plots and never make them visible and audible, must, as I judge, be imputed to the poet and that he may in all justice be charged with the blame for them; for though they cannot be truly categorized as inherently poetic errors they are nevertheless adventitiously related to the art of poetry.

Errors of the kind we have been considering are not all to be judged equally blameworthy, and some of them are perhaps for one reason or another to be excused. As a general rule it may be said that the more easily the subject matter from which they spring may be mastered and the more widely the knowledge of it is diffused in the community as a whole, including its grosser members, the more serious the error; whereas it will be the less serious the

more remote it is from common experience, the less perfectly it is known, and the more difficult it is of access to ordinary intellectual capacities. It will therefore be well for us to distinguish into five kinds matters related to poetry in each of which the poet may commit an error not involving his own art, though of these errors some will be more and some less grave than others. The first consists of matters of common knowledge which are within the reach of every ordinary intelligence, so that anyone incapable of understanding them is recognized as something of a dullard and wanting in common sense. Many examples of errors of this kind are found in the poets, but we will restrict ourselves to one from Boccaccio. In the *Decameron* (1. 10) Dioneo says, "I beg of you a special favor, which I would enjoy as long as our company shall be together, and it is that I not be constrained to abide, against my will, by this rule, which prescribes that each shall tell a story on the theme proposed, but that I be free to tell one that will please me more. And lest anyone believe that I crave this favor as one who has no stories on hand, I shall be glad hereafter to be always the last to take my turn." In these last words Dioneo betrays his ignorance of what is known to every rudest mind, and consequently his lack of common sense, for he fails to see that to be the first or the last to tell a story when one is not obliged to keep within a predetermined theme neither proves nor disproves that one has more than one of its kind on hand, it being obvious that a story not on that theme cannot be anticipated by any storyteller, though he be one of a thousand, who keeps within it. Because matters of this kind are more than clear to persons at all levels of intelligence every slight error in them must be accounted very grave.

The second kind consists of those arts, like grammar and metrics, without which a poem cannot come into being and be brought before the eyes and ears of an audience. Since the grammar of living languages is natural to those who speak them, grammatical errors in those languages are highly ludicrous, as being such as one would suppose neither could nor should be committed. Of this type is the error committed by Ariosto when he wrote in the *Orlando Furioso* (23. 107):

Che fosse culta in suo linguaggio io penso
Et era ne la nostra tale il senso:...

In these lines *ne la nostra* does not agree in gender with *linguaggio*. But the error is due to a lapse of memory rather than to ignorance of grammar. Ariosto's first version of these lines reads:

Che fosse culta in la sua lingua io penso;
Et era ne la nostra tale il senso:...

It seemed to him, however, that *in la* was not frequently met in the best vernacular, and finding it offensive altered *in la sua lingua* to *in suo linguaggio*, forgetting in the meantime that the substitution of a masculine for a feminine noun demanded a change in the gender of the pronoun in the next line.... If

we go to the poets in the vulgar tongue for examples of metrical errors we shall find several kinds. Thus a poet may repeat a rhyme in the same poem, as Petrarch does in his canzone on the Virgin and in his "Trionfo della Castità,"⁴ or he may rhyme a whole word with itself, as Dante does in the ninth canto of the *Paradiso*, where he rhymes *torna* with *torna*, if, that is, we accept the second *torna* in the spelling generally met in the printed texts and in the sense in which it is generally understood (the true reading is *t'orna: te ornat*).⁵ He may also give a word fewer than the proper number of syllables. Thus some modern poets have used *fiate* as a dissyllable, perhaps misled by the example of Dante, who, if we follow the accepted reading, so used it in the second line of the tercet:

Al suo Leon cinquecento cinquanta
Et trenta fiata venne questo foco
A rinfiammarsi sotto la sua pianta.

But that line is corrupt and should read: "Et tre fiata venne in questo foco," for reasons we have offered elsewhere.⁶ I will not speak of other ways in which vernacular poets may fall into metrical errors, for I have given a full account of them in my *Giunta* to the second book of Bembo's work on the vulgar tongue.⁷

The third kind of matter which is subordinate to the art of poetry and in which the poet may commit errors that seem to be unpardonable is history. By history I mean not only genuine history, the kind that has been received in writing, but also the fabulous, whether or not it is accepted as true, and either history or fable, whether or not it ever passed into writing. An error in history is committed by Dante when he has Virgil declare that he was born "*sub Iulio*, though it were late,"⁸ for Virgil was born long before Julius Caesar robbed the Roman Republic of its liberties, and he was not born under Caesar's consulship, a circumstance that might in some fashion warrant the use of the phrase *sub Iulio*. Another such error, and one that has been observed by many, is committed by Virgil, who represents Dido and Aeneas as contemporaries....⁹ It is to be noted that historical errors are of two kinds, the unwitting, as Dante's perhaps is, and the deliberate, like Virgil's, who knew that the tale he told was a lie. Those of the second kind seem to me to be the more serious because they may almost be called errors in the art of poetry. For poetry must not and cannot falsify history, and for this reason among others, that if it represents what is known to be true precisely as it is known, the parts of the poem invented by the poet are readily accepted as probable and are almost taken for true.

The fourth kind of matter that is subordinate to the art of poetry consists of certain arts. These are not the arts we have already mentioned, without which there could be no poetry, but those, such as medicine, astronomy, and the like, which are distinct from the art of poetry and far removed from it and whose relations to it are transitory and adventitious. An example of an error in astronomy may be found in Petrarch, who, wishing to designate the sixth day of April says that the sun "was already warming either horn of

Taurus." The statement is misleading because the sun never enters Taurus until after the sixth day of April....¹⁰ In my opinion we have here a double error. Petrarch is ignorant of the time at which the sun enters Taurus. This is an error in astronomy, and therefore only incidentally an offense against the art of poetry. But it may also be called a peculiarly poetic error in that the poet must at all times and as far as possible keep his poems clear of astronomical or other scientific matter beyond the intellectual reach of the populace. In Homer the seasons of the year and the hours of the day are never indicated by the rising or setting of stars unknown to the multitude, and the same can be said for Virgil in his *Aeneid*. Their example, however, was unwisely ignored by some later poets, by Ovid occasionally, by Lucan quite frequently, but most frequently by Dante in his *Comedy*, who for this reason creates many difficulties for the unlearned and thus makes his poem less pleasing to the very public for whom poems are primarily composed.

The fifth and last kind of matter consists of some sciences and the knowledge of some facts of nature which may become the source of errors that readers must excuse. For the sciences in question are very difficult and abstruse, and the knowledge of natural facts may be far from familiar to us for being descriptive of phenomena observable only in lands remote from our own, with the result that when introduced into a poem they cannot always shine there with the requisite light of truth. Thus it would seem that we should have to refrain from finding fault with Statius, who wrote (*Achilleis* 2. 99-100) that Achilles was nourished on the marrow of lions' bones, an error repeated by Hermogenes in his *Progyrnasmata* (chap. 7), the fact being, as Aristotle attests (*Hist. Anim.* 3. 7), that the bones of lions have no marrow, or so little that they may be said to have none. Statius' error was repeated by Ariosto (*O. F.* 7. 57), who tells of his Ruggiero that he was nourished on the same food. We should also have to refrain from censuring those who, like St. Augustine, have held that there are no antipodes (*Civ. Dei.* 16. 9), or like Petrarch have had doubts about their existence.¹¹ In our day every doubt of this kind has been dispelled by the discovery of the New World. Though the errors just described are not properly errors in the art of poetry, not all of them are to be excused for that reason.

Errors in the art of poetry, none of them excusable, are of five kinds. A poet may choose an unpoetic subject, composing a versified treatise on some art or science or a history in verse. On the other hand, having chosen a poetic subject he may fail in the proper construction of the plot in one or more of four ways: by including superfluous matter, excluding necessary matter, transposing some part or parts out of their proper order, introducing matter that undermines the plot's effectiveness. We have already shown that Virgil introduced superfluous matter in the *Aeneid* when he described the transformation of Cupid into Ascanius (p. 256) and of Aeneas' fleet into nymphs (p. 80). We have also shown that he excluded from it necessary matter when he failed to represent Dido as remembering the women whom Aeneas had left behind on the African shore and inviting them to the city or providing them with shelter and other necessities. The transposal of parts might be exemplified in Virgil's extended account of the descent of Mercury from Heaven

to Carthage in the fourth book of the *Aeneid* (246ff.), and in his brief account of a like descent in the first book (300–301). These two parts are out of their proper order, for the extended account suited the first descent much more than the second. Examples of parts that undermine the plot's effectiveness are found in Euripides' *Trojan Women* and in Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*. In the first of these Menelaus is represented as having decided at the instance of the Trojan women to serve justice by having Helen put to death, an episode which to some extent diminishes, at a time when the poet should have sought to increase, the pity for the sufferings of the women of Troy then welling up in the spectators. In the second the soldier is surprised wantoning with a woman whom he believed to be of noble birth but who was in fact baseborn. After he has been subjected to a cudgeling and has paid a certain sum of money to escape castration, he is allowed to depart in the delusion that he had enjoyed the favors of a woman who was worth all the pains the adventure had entailed, feeling neither pain from the cudgeling nor regret for the loss of his money—all of which robs the jest of its proper effect.¹² A similar situation is differently handled¹³ in Boccaccio's story (*Dec.* 8. 4) of the importunate provost of Fiesole, who fell into the delusion that he lay in bed with a widow whom he fancied but was made to see that she was really the Ciutazza.

Errors in the art of poetry consist not only in the five offenses against the plot that we have just described, but in the improper handling of character, thought, and language. We have already discussed (p. 165) the error of depicting a tragic character as wicked in the extreme, for such characters will fail to move the audience to pity and fear, which is the end the poet has in view. The thought is badly handled whenever a speech contains too many arguments or too few, when it is out of its proper order, or when it tends to disprove the very thing it was designed to prove. These matters are fully discussed by the masters of rhetoric, to whom I refer the reader. We may speak of error in the handling of language when the poet has chosen an unconventional and unsuitable metre, composing a tragedy, for instance, in hexameters or an epic poem in iambic verse, or when he has employed language of a kind that ill serves the idea he is seeking to convey. Thus, wishing to say that it would be no sorrow to him to depart this life before his time if he could thereby see in Heaven things as beautiful as Laura's eyes, Petrarch (*Canz.* 72. 16–20) uses the metaphor of a prison. This metaphor weakens the force of his statement, for no one but desires to escape from prison even if he is not thereby assured of immediate entry into Heaven. Petrarch's statement would have been more forceful if he had said, as he indeed does say in another canzone (206. 32–36), that he would willingly endure the hardships of a long imprisonment if he could thereby be assured the contemplation of his mistress' beauties.¹⁴

3

*Errors in the Art of Poetry*¹

[2.237] Aristotle has just drawn a distinction between correctness in the art of poetry and in the other arts, and consequently has assumed that error in the art of poetry is one thing and error in the other arts another. He now (25. 60b 15-21) proceeds to distinguish from one another the errors within the art of poetry itself, saying first that they are of two kinds, those directly involving that art and the adventitious. To make the distinction clear he adds that an error may be said to involve the art when the poet produces an unsuccessful imitation of his object, and that it may be called adventitious when the imitation is successful but its object has not been observed as it really is. There is still another error which since it does not consist in the poet's failure to imitate the object successfully does not involve his art and since it does not consist in his failure to observe his object is not really adventitious. It consists in the representation of impossibilities invented by the poet. Thus errors involving the art of poetry are to be distinguished from errors of three other kinds: from those involving other arts, from those that are adventitious, and from the representations of impossibilities invented by the poet. Between errors involving the art of poetry and the rest there is also this difference, that the former are blameworthy and inexcusable, whereas the latter are less blameworthy and for one reason or another may be excused. Now though Aristotle holds that political correctness is one thing and poetic correctness another and that errors in arts other than that of poetry are not of the kind directly involving this art, yet he never explicitly asserts that errors in the other arts are excusable or are less serious than errors in the art of poetry. We may rightly infer, however, that this is indeed his opinion, for there would have been no point to his distinguishing rightness and wrongness in the art of poetry from rightness and wrongness in the other arts if he had not meant to imply that in a poem errors in the latter arts are less serious than those in the art of poetry. What is more, if we do not take adventitious errors to be the less serious and in some way excusable, we shall not come up with all twelve of the answers to the objections which may be raised to poems of whatever kind and of which this answer is one (25. 61b 24-25).

But some one might object that if simply choosing the wrong object for imitation is to be called an error in the art of poetry even though the resulting imitation is unmarred by error, why should we not speak of the wrong choice of matter from another art, even where it is correctly imitated, as an error of the same sort? What, for instance, will forbid us to label Petrarch's astronomical error in his description of the advent of spring as an error in the art of poetry even though his imitation of the entrance of the sun in Taurus is faultless? To this we may reply that Aristotle has in mind the errors in the other arts for which those who cultivate them are responsible and which the poets adopt as they find them, such errors are not to be imputed to poetry

and the poets but to those who were first guilty of them. Another reply would be that the act by which the poet fails to choose the right kinds of things from the other arts is less an inherently poetic act than is that of choosing the right objects for poetic imitation, such objects as exist in the domain of common sense and are continuously present to the senses. The poetic process, then, consists of two operations: selection (knowing how to select the right object and to come to know it as it really is) and imitation (knowing how to imitate skilfully and faithfully the object selected). Since, however, poetry exists to imitate, and imitation — skilful imitation — is its principal operation, errors in imitation are the most serious of all as being failures in the poetic operation to which all the others are subordinate and not in one that is merely a means to an end. Errors of selection, on the other hand, are called adventitious because they touch matters remote from the proper end of poetry and do not adversely affect the workings of the imitative process. For just as there are men whose elective faculties are corrupt while their rational faculties are sound, who, in other words, make bad moral choices and yet reason well, others who make good moral choices and reason badly, and still others who both choose and reason badly, so there are poets who choose the wrong objects but imitate them impeccably, those who choose the right objects but imitate them badly, and still others who choose objects that they have not observed as they really are and fail to imitate them appropriately.

The nature of the adventitious error that consists in selecting the wrong object for imitation has been adequately clarified by Aristotle with the two examples of the hind represented with horns and of the running horse represented throwing both right legs forward at the same time. On the other hand he has failed to offer an example of an error in the art itself, which is to say of a faulty imitation, having been content to rest with the observation that not knowing that a hind has no horns is a lesser error than producing a faulty imitation of a hind. For this reason we are constrained to say that in this passage he makes it quite clear that correctness in the art of poetry consists in skilful imitation, i.e., in presenting before the mind's eye by means of metrical language objects remote in time or in place and in presenting them so vividly that they are as clearly visible to the mind's eye as they would be to the body's. To Aristotle imitation of this kind represents the perfection of poetry, for he says that whoever falls short of it is guilty of what he calls the error directly involving the art — in poetry the greatest of all possible errors. This opinion was shared by many critics in the past, and is held by a very great many in our own time.

It should be recalled, however, that the opinion differs profoundly from another advanced on an earlier page, where the paramount concern of the art of poetry was said to be the proper fashioning of the plot, i.e., the representation of a possible human action and not the vivid representation of remote objects. For if the perfection of poetry consisted in this vividness it would follow that it would be a matter of no importance whether the poet represented history or fiction, whether he imitated, that is, a historical action or a possible action of his own invention. It would then be in poetry as it is in painting,

which attains its perfection in a vivid imitation in colors on a plane surface and where, consequently, it matters nothing whether the object imitated is a known individual or some type imagined by the painter. I could therefore wish that Aristotle had avoided this confusion by ranking intrinsically poetic errors in their order of gravity, naming more of them than he has and distinguishing them more clearly from one another. These errors might be ranked and described as follows. (1) Those which weaken or corrupt the plot as a whole or in part. These errors Aristotle might call, if he so chose, errors directly involving the art. (2) Those which pale or obscure the vividness of the imitation. These errors are of three kinds, according as the imitation represents mountains, rivers, cities, men, beasts, tempests, and the like, or character, or thought. (3) Those which mar or vitiate the language. (4) Improbabilities or impossibilities invented by the poet to flesh out the plot. (5) The representation, again for the purpose of fleshing out the plot, of objects otherwise than as they are known in nature, in everyday life, in history, in the arts, or in the sciences. This error is to be subdivided into a number of others, perhaps into the five that we have already discussed, or into more or less than five others, as would best serve the clear exposition and the teaching of the matter under discussion....

* * * * *

[2.242] Aristotle now (25. 60b 18-21) mentions two errors he has already discussed and speaks of a third, adding that none of the three is directly involved in the art of poetry. He has tacitly said that an error in some art other than the art of poetry must not be accounted an offense against that art and that the representation of an object otherwise than as it actually is is an adventitious error. He now resumes what he has already said on the first two errors and speaks of a third, which consists in the invention of impossibilities. In conclusion he adds that none of these errors is an offense against the art of poetry.... Now if the intrinsically poetic error consists in the unskilful imitation of an object in metrical language, it follows that the error of representing an object otherwise than it actually is, that committed in some art other than the art of poetry, and that of introducing in the poem impossibilities invented by the poet are none of them errors in the poetic art. And since none of them is the result of unskilful imitation none of them is as reprehensible as the one that is.

We must recall that Aristotle has named three kinds of objects that may be imitated by the poet, those supplied by history, those supplied by the arts and sciences, and those supplied by the poet's imagination. The first two of these he has denied to the poet as proper objects of his imitation so as to prevent his becoming a historian, a philosopher, or a master of some art; but he does not forbid him to make occasional use of them as means to ends, as when he finds it necessary to incorporate some historical fact or some scientific or artistic doctrine into the invention that constitutes the body of his poem. In this passage, therefore, Aristotle is speaking of the errors that might be com-

mitted in each of these three matters in so far as it is permissible for the poet to introduce them in his poems. Now there is a human history and a natural history. The first treats human events, which being under fortune's sway are subject to change, the second animals (whether of the earth, the sea, or the air) and plants, which being under nature's sway are unchangeable and always the same. The poet is never at liberty to alter a known historical event, just as he is never at liberty to alter the known natural history of an animal. Thus he could not depict a horse as throwing both his right legs forward simultaneously, for a horse in motion naturally throws forward a right leg and a left at the same time. Observe that Aristotle neither mentions nor gives an example of the error which consists in the altering of some event in human history either because he believes that nothing needs to be added to what he has already said on the subject or because to his mind the example of the inaccurately observed movement of the horse's legs provides a sufficient warning against altering a historical event in the telling. Observe also that he neither mentions nor offers an example of errors in the sciences, expecting us to see for ourselves that what has been said about errors in the arts applies *a fortiori* to those in the sciences, so that if errors in arts other than the art of poetry are excusable, so much more so are those in the sciences, they being further beyond the intellectual reach of the populace than the arts. Finally he says that the invention of impossibilities is not an intrinsically poetic error. In this we have further confirmation of the allegation we made above, that Aristotle here departs from the doctrine he laid down in an earlier part of this work. For if a poem is by its very nature a representation of possibilities, it follows that the invention of impossibilities is fatal to the very substance of poetry and consequently that it is an error intrinsic to the art. But this subject will be more appropriately discussed in the pages that follow....

4

Impossibilities

[2.248] Aristotle holds (25. 60b 21-32) that though impossibilities may be accounted true poetic inventions in so far as they are vividly represented, they are nevertheless to be condemned in so far as they are impossible unless they operate to enhance the effect of the poem by making it more marvelous. Observe that the impossibilities that Aristotle has in mind are not impossibilities in the sense that they cannot be conceived as coming into being but only in the sense that though they may in some manner come to be, it is improbable that they will, and in fact do so only rarely. That this is so is made clear by the example he offers to clarify his meaning, that of Achilles' pursuit of Hector (*Il* 22. 131ff.), which is not by nature an impossibility but

is so called because it is a highly improbable occurrence and not the kind of thing commonly met with. For it seems to Aristotle highly improbable that a victorious host which had only recently suffered so grievously at Hector's hands and which numbered among its captains a great many who were Achilles' peers or superiors in authority should have desisted from attacking Hector at a signal from that same Achilles, content to stand idly by to see what the outcome of the duel would be.

Impossibilities, then, are of more than one kind. (1) Some things are considered impossible not only to men but also to God. Thus, to glance at only two of many, it is impossible that what has been done has not been done, and according to some it is impossible for a three-dimensional natural body to be in more than one place at the same time. [The latter proposition has been the subject of bitter controversy in our day, the occasion being the doubts that have been cast on the real presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist]....¹ (2) Some things are not impossible to God—as, for instance, the things we call miracles—yet they ought to be and can be reputed impossible when God's will to perform them is unknown and no reason is apparent why He should will to perform them. (3) Some things are impossible to men which, like miracles, are not impossible to God. (4) Finally some things can and ought to be reputed impossible to men not because they are necessarily so but because they are so improbable that they appear impossible, as being uncommon and not affording us the necessary evidence for believing them possible. Of this kind are the pursuit of Hector by Achilles and the setting down of Ulysses asleep on the shores of Ithaca by the sailors from Corfu (*Od.* 13. 63ff.) Of these four kinds of impossibilities the first and the third cannot be legitimately invented by the poet and are never for any reason to be introduced into a poem. The second and the fourth kinds, on the other hand, lie within the legitimate scope of the poet's invention and are to be accepted in poetry provided the reason for their being is apparent, and this notwithstanding the fact that they would seem to be impossible and are of rare occurrence. Why impossibilities of these two kinds can and should be acceptable as poetic inventions when they are invented for a reason is quite clear; it is because the poet seeks to move the reader or the hearer to wonder, and this is best done by means of miraculous actions and by natural actions of very rare occurrence. But Aristotle also holds that when these impossibilities have no reason for being, so that we are unable to tell why God should have performed a given miracle or how men brought an apparent impossibility to pass, they are not to be condemned as long as they contribute to the proper effect of poetry.

To understand Aristotle's meaning clearly it should be noted that the two types of impossibilities that may legitimately be invented by the poet, both those which are accompanied by the reason for their being and those which, though they are, still contribute to the proper effect of the art of poetry, belong to the things we have already subsumed under the term "possibility." Those for which the reason is offered belong with what we have subsumed under the term "credibility." If the impossibility contributes to the effect of the poem, then it belongs with the things which we have said are useful to the plot. On

the other hand, the first and third types of impossibilities, which we have said may not legitimately be invented by the poet, are the same as those which we have subsumed under the term "impossibility." If the reason for an incident's being brought to pass is not offered, then the action is "incredible"; if it contributes nothing to the effect of the poem, then it belongs in the class of things which we have shown to be of no benefit to the plot. Hence impossibilities of the second and fourth kinds may be invented by the poet provided they are made credible, i.e., provided the poet tells why the impossibility occurred; for an impossibility of either of these kinds becomes a possibility once the reason for it is offered. Further, these impossibilities may legitimately be invented by the poet even when the reason for them is not made manifest, provided they are accompanied by many excellences, i.e., by other inventions that are delightful in themselves and beautifully expressed. An invention of this kind was found by Aristotle in the setting ashore of the sleeping Ulysses in Ithaca (*Od.* 13. 93ff.). Again, impossibilities of these kinds may be invented though the reason for them is not offered and they are unaccompanied by other excellences provided they are made less offensive by excusable ignorance. We have found an impossibility of this kind in certain lines in Petrarch in which he designates the sixth day of April with the observation that the sun was entering Taurus ("Trionfo d'Amore" pt. 1. 1-5) and in another in Statius, in which he attributes marrow to lions' bones so as to provide his Achilles with unusual nourishment.² Two impossibilities mentioned by Aristotle, of the horse in motion with both right legs thrown forward at the same time and of the hind with horns, would also be of this kind. Finally, impossibilities of these kinds may be invented even though unaccompanied by the reason for their being, unadorned by beautiful invention and language, and unredeemed by excusable ignorance provided they serve the end of the art of poetry, i.e., are of benefit to the plot. An impossibility of this sort is to be found in the *Orestes* of Euripides. In that tragedy Menelaus unjustly favors his father-in-law Tyndareus over his nephew Orestes, yet his impossible or improbable choice cannot be condemned, since it is useful to the plot. In the passage now under discussion Aristotle offers an example of it in the pursuit of Hector by Achilles. To him it seems improbable or impossible that the Greek army should have refrained from attacking Hector because it had been beckoned to do so by Achilles; yet he calls the invention acceptable because it benefits the plot, making Achilles' pursuit of Hector more marvelous.

This seems to be the doctrine set forth by Aristotle in different parts of the *Poetics* regarding the impossibilities that may be legitimately invented by the poet. It seems to us, however, that poets should never lose sight of the following principles, the first two of which have been laid down before this: (1) Incidents that are at once possible and credible must not be invented unless they are of some benefit to the plot. We have seen that the transformation of Aeneas' ships into nymphs (*Aen.* 9. 69ff.) does not meet this requirement and for that reason should never have been invented. (2) Incidents at once possible and incredible are never to be invented even when the poet takes care to set them in the midst of many excellences. This is the reason why we have withheld

our approval from the depositing of the sleeping Ulysses on the shores of Ithaca. (3) That poets must not always be excused the invention of impossibilities that are made less offensive by excusable ignorance. Such inventions are inexcusable when the reason that induces a poet to treat matters outside the province of his own art, or imperfectly known in his own country, is not a compelling one; and they are especially inexcusable when he indulges in them so as to appear to be what he is not, i.e., one learned in many arts and sciences and conversant with many matters. Thus, wishing his readers to believe that he was conversant with astronomy, Petrarch ("Trionfo d'Amore" pt. 1. 1-5) presumed to designate the sixth day of April by referring to the position of the sun in the Zodiac for no compelling reason, expressing his idea thus: "The sun already warmed either horn of Taurus." (4) That, whatever Aristotle may say, the invention of incidents at once possible and incredible must not be accounted permissible even when they benefit the plot, for an evil must never be embraced as the means to a good. Homer and other poets have seen fit to invent such incidents; but until I have been shown that they have done so with good reason, I will not speak a word in praise of their inventions. Nor should we absolve them of guilt because those inventions enabled them to achieve the proper end of the art of poetry, i.e. to make their poems more marvelous and of greater efficacy to move those who read or hear them; for they entered the sheepfold not by the gate, the way of the shepherd and the watchdog, but by the way of the thief and the wolf; that is to say, they did not come to the more marvelous and the more moving by the gate of verisimilitude, the way of the poet and the true imitator, but by the gate of incredibility, the way of the fool and the ignorant mass of men.

* * * * *

[2.252] Reading (25. 60b 24-25) that impossibilities are acceptable if they serve the end of the art as that end has been defined by him, we must not take Aristotle to mean that he has told what the end is of the art of which he speaks in those lines, for he has nowhere said so much as one word on that subject. What he has said (6. 50a 20-24) is that an end is that for which the other parts are introduced, from which he draws the conclusion that the end is the greatest thing of all and that therefore since character, thought, language, spectacle, and music are designed to serve the plot and not the reverse, the plot is to be given the highest rank among them. And at this point we must likewise say that in the subject which we are at present considering the end is the cause for introducing other parts and is to be ranked above them all, and that we may tolerate shortcomings in them if the end has been appropriately fashioned. Now the subject at present under consideration is not, as it was in the passage just referred to, the tragic or epic plot as the end which its other parts are designed to serve; it is possibilities and impossibilities, that is, as I understand it, the credible and the incredible things represented by the poet which he brings into the poem to serve one of two ends: lending vividness to some part of the poem or making the narrative more marvelous. If we consider the

first end, that of vivid representation, it matters not at all that the things to be represented are credible or incredible, for a hind with horns can be as vivid as one without them, though the first hind is credible and the second incredible; if we consider the second, and find that it will be better served by incredible than by credible things, we must accept the former and discard the latter, which lack the power to enhance the marvelous in the narrative. Thus the pursuit of Hector by Achilles is more marvelous by reason of what appears to be the incredible restraint of the Greek host than it would be if that host had credibly ignored Achilles' sign and joined him in the pursuit of his foe. In this passage, then, the word "art" is used in two different senses: knowing how to use credible and incredible things to the end of making the narrative more marvelous and knowing how to bring into the poem things as they truly are or in a form not their own to the end of enhancing the vividness of some part of the poem. Aristotle speaks first of art in the first sense because the poet is properly more concerned with the enhancement of the marvelous than with vivid representation, and only in the second sense, vivid representation being less the poet's concern than the painter's; and he asserts that the poet may legitimately invent the incredible whenever it promises to serve the marvelous more effectively than the credible. I, on the other hand, maintain that the incredible cannot astound us. Thus if I consider it incredible that Daedalus is capable of flight I cannot marvel at any representation that shows him flying; and if I consider it incredible that the Greeks would desist from attacking Hector at a signal from Achilles, I cannot marvel either at their restraint or at the fact that Hector is pursued by Achilles and Achilles alone. But what can be so little credible about this pursuit that Aristotle felt constrained to cite it twice as an example of an incredible action? When he saw Hector in flight Achilles did a highly probable thing: he signalled to the other captains to hold back so that, as Homer tells us, none of them should rob him of the glory of slaying Hector. They, on their part, did an equally probable thing: they restrained themselves because they knew that to subject one man to the assault of many has ever been held dishonorable and unworthy of the gallantry of valiant men-at-arms. Nor is it difficult to believe that the multitude of common soldiers held back, for they did so in obedience to Achilles, who enjoyed very great authority over them, and they would be all the more likely to do this because they know that Hector could never escape death at Achilles' hands....

5

More on the Defensible Objects of Imitation

[2.255] Aristotle now (60b 29-31) speaks of the errors, whether intrinsic or adventitious, that are committed against the art whose end is vivid represen-

tation. He has no doubt that it is a greater failure to represent an object less than vividly than to attribute to it some part that it does not naturally possess, for vivid representation finds its end and perfection in manifesting the monstrous and imperfect as well as the natural and perfect. (But as I have already said, this is the proper end of painting and not of poetry, for the quality of a painter's art is recognizable in a hind with horns as well as in one without horns, though the former is a monstrosity.) This error, which Aristotle both here and above calls adventitious, is very different from the one which consists in the invention of impossibilities, for the adventitious error stems from pardonable ignorance and the other from design, the poet's aim being to make his narrative more moving and marvelous; the adventitious error may be called an error of fact, the other an error of intention. And because the first is an error of fact it is to be tolerated when for whatever reason the fact cannot be fully ascertained, as the fact that the hind differs from the stag in having no horns cannot be fully ascertained in countries where the deer is not indigenous and is seldom seen. To believe that a hind has horns is unquestionably an error, but in this case an excusable one, and is therefore to be regarded as an adventitious and not an intrinsic error in the art of vivid representation....

* * * * *

[2.258] Let us suppose that a poet is criticized for, say, producing an imitation of something that does not exist and therefore can be said to be false. If the apologist cannot reply in his defense that the object exists now or existed formerly and is therefore true, he must take a different tack and perhaps argue that the object is represented as it ought to be; and if this argument too lacks validity he must turn to another. Now the clause (25. 60b 32-33) "If he is blamed because the object is not true" reveals Aristotle's assumption that if one can prove that the object of the poet's imitation exists now or existed formerly one has produced a valid defense of his work, and there is no need to essay another. Thus if anyone had criticized Sophocles for introducing into his *Electra* a chariot race as a regular event in the Pythian games of Orestes' time, before those games included such a race, it might have been said in his defense that it was a regular event in those games at the time the *Electra* was composed, and this defense of a patent error should presumably have been acceptable thanks to the figure of speech which commonly goes under the name of anachronism and which we might designate in our own terms as "transposal of time." I have already said, and I now repeat, that I find that defense unacceptable, for I take Sophocles' error to be a historical one, and, as I have already said, historical errors constitute an offense into which no poet must ever lapse. In my opinion the figure we have just named is poetically valid only when the transposal is one of names, for when operating with these limits it justifies the giving of modern names to ancient things before the modern names have been adopted and of ancient names to modern things after the ancient names have been discarded. Thus Dante wrote of the Roman eagle (*Par.* 6. 49-51) that

It humbled the pride of the Arabs
Who crossed the Alpine rocks behind Hannibal,

And Petrarch describes his vision of Rome ("Trionfo della Fama" 23-24) with

At her right she had that great Roman
Who wrought such havoc in Germany and France.

Yet in Hannibal's time Africa was not inhabited by Arabs, and its inhabitants were not known by that name, and in Caesar's day France had no other name but that of Gaul, the Franks not having yet overrun it and given it the name of France. Thanks, however, to the figure anachronism this nomenclature becomes legitimate. That figure might also be called metaphor, for what Dante and Petrarch do is to "transfer" from one historical period to another the names, the one of a people, the other of a country.

My meaning becomes clearer if we note that once we admit that some person or thing of one period may by the figure called anachronism be transferred without blame to another, we are obliged to accept as legitimate the transfer, by another figure which might perhaps be called "anatomism," of a historical occurrence or other fact from one place to another; that, for example, if we may, with Virgil, make Dido and Aeneas contemporaries, we may also disregard the testimony of some and, again with Virgil, represent deer as indigenous to that part of Africa on which Aeneas chanced to land.¹ We shall also be obliged to accept as legitimate, by appeal to a figure that might perhaps be called "anaprosopism," the attribution to one person of an action or other thing that history has attributed to another. Some say that Virgil did this very thing when he attributed to Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, the harrying of the Dulichian vessels which history attributes to Phorcys, and again when he attributed to Pollux the role of tamer of horses which was in reality Castor's.² (But these critics are in error and, as we shall show elsewhere, impute to Virgil faults of which he is not guilty.) By appealing to this figure one may excuse of theft all authors who have stolen whole plots or stories, or recognizable parts of them, and have transferred them to their books with only a change of the names. (We have already given examples of thefts of this sort (p. 105), which are especially frequent in the *Decameron* and the *Orlando Furioso*.) We shall also be obliged to accept as legitimate, by appeal to a figure that might perhaps be called "anatomism," the introduction of changes in the known version of an action. Thus the manner of Cacus' death as told by Virgil in the *Aeneid* (8. 256ff.) is not identical, as it should be, with the one told by the same Virgil in the *Comedy* (*Inf.* 25. 25ff.), though it perhaps agrees, as it should not, with the one described by Ovid in the first book of the *Fasti* (569ff.). In short, if we accept as legitimate the transfer of persons, events, etc. from one time to another, we shall be obliged to accept as legitimate not only all the other transfers just described but still others as well, with the result that no error but will find its sufficient excuse and be received with indulgence. In the end it will be impossible to err, and where it is impossible to incur

censure it is equally impossible to merit praise.

Next, though we have said that the use of an ancient name for a modern or of a modern for an ancient is sanctioned by the figure called anachronism, yet it must be borne in mind that this statement does not hold true in all circumstances. To be legitimate the exchange must fulfill one of three conditions: (1) it must be made by a person in position to know both names; (2) the name not used must be the one not current in the language in which the poem is written; (3) the name used must not engender suspicions that the poet's conception of God is less than orthodox and offensive to the ears of the faithful. Examples will clarify whatever obscurities may be contained in these statements. (1) Dante, or the person in whose mouth he puts the lines,³ knew that the peoples of Africa were called Africans in antiquity and Arabs in modern times; and knowing both names he could appropriately give the ancient Africans their modern name (*Par.* 6. 49-51), calling them Arabs by an acceptable use of the figure anachronism. But if he had known only one name, say the ancient, he could have referred to them only as Africans, otherwise we should have to believe that he possessed powers of divination. But if no poet not a diviner can use the name he does not know in place of the one he knows, neither can he allow a character in his poem who does not possess powers of divination to use a name unknown to him. It has been observed (Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 10. 16. 3) that Virgil lapses into this improbability (*Aen.* 6. 365-6) when he has Palinurus beg Aeneas to return to the "Velian harbor," thus giving to Velia a name it had not yet received in his time. The same kind of improbability is found in Plautus, who in his *Amphitryon* (329, 746) represents Sosia and Amphitryon using the name of Hercules as an oath (*hercle*) and as a means of invoking divine aid before Hercules was born and before either suspected that he was to be born; and we call this an improbability notwithstanding the fact that in Plautus' time Hercules' name was used for both purposes. Nor does Ariosto avoid this error when he has one of his characters insult Ferraù — Ferraù being a Spaniard — by calling him a *marrano*, for the fact is that this term of abuse was not invented until some centuries later, when the Jews in Spain were compelled by the royal authority to choose between openly embracing Christianity, though against their will, and wandering over the earth in want and degradation.⁴ Thus the use of one name for another is permissible only to those who know both. (2) If, on the other hand, a character does not know both names, the poet will nevertheless be permitted to put in his mouth the one name unknown to him when he represents him as speaking a language in which that name and no other is the one in use. Thus if a poet should introduce Julius Caesar in a poem in the vernacular and should give him occasion to name France, he could not have him call that country by any but its modern name, which in Caesar's time had not yet been invented and which, being unendowed with powers of divination, Caesar could not have known; for the name *Gallia*, in use in his time, was never adopted by the Italian language, and lacking it an Italian poet is obliged to use the name France whether his character is an ancient or a modern. Hence it should occasion less surprise than it has that in the lines quoted above Petrarch should

have given France its modern name. (3) We must be on our guard against using a name—say, the ancient in place of the modern name of a thing—which might offend the ears of the faithful because it seems to betray the writer as of a religion other than the one he professes before the world. This is a pitfall that Petrarch did not avoid when he spoke of the fear of “the steersman of the Styx” (*Canz.* 58) to signify the fear of death. For the Christian who desires to be known as a Christian, as Petrarch, judging both by his subject and the person he addresses,⁵ must have desired when he composed the sonnet, cannot without scandal speak of death in terms of Charon and his ferrying of souls across the Styx, which in the pagan religion were always associated with death. Nor can the Christian who desires to be known as a Christian utter without scandal such ancient and pagan oaths and supplications as *hercle*, *mehercules*, *medius fidius*, *per deos immortales*, *si diis placet*, and the like, which, in his book against Celsus the Epicurean, Origen (if memory serves me) reproaches the Christians of his day for using.⁶ Yet though condemned by Origen and eschewed by prudent Christians these scandalous expressions are nevertheless used by certain of our contemporaries, like Longueil, Sadoletto, and others, out of a desire to be known as upholders no less of the glory of the Latin tongue than of the purity of the Christian faith.⁷ Petrarch sometimes provided the corrective to scandals of this sort and by so doing tempered the offense they might otherwise have given. Thus when he called Christ by the name of Apollo he called him *immortal* Apollo (*Canz.* 28. 65) to distinguish him from the god of fable, and when he called the true God by the name of Jove he called him the *living* Jove (*Canz.* 246) to distinguish him from the son of Saturn, who is dead and whose tomb was once to be seen in Crete....⁸

* * * * *

[2.265] When a poet has been accused of not having represented his objects as they are or were, he can defend himself by answering that he has represented them as they ought to be. And since the charge leveled at him is (25. 60b 32–33) that the objects as represented are “not true,” i.e., as I interpret the clause, have not been represented as they were or are because the poet altered them as he saw fit or made something new of them, the question that needs answering is whether the objects said to be “not true” are of the kind that may or may not be altered or transformed; for if they are of the latter kind, I fail to see how protesting that they have been represented as they ought to be can constitute a valid defense. As I understand the matter, the objects of imitation Aristotle has in mind are of this latter kind, for the clause in question is immediately followed (25. 60b 33–34) by Sophocles’ observation that “he represented [his characters] as they ought [to be] and Euripides as they were,” which is to say as they were known, in the way tragic personages and their natures are known, through history or tradition. If Sophocles’ observation is true, then Aristotle would have us commend Euripides for deferring to history or tradition and to condemn Sophocles for ignoring the authority of both. But Aristotle himself has already said and will soon repeat that Euripides

represented Menelaus neither as he was nor as he ought to have been to merit our admiration, but transformed him into the kind of person that the plot of his *Orestes* required if it was to proceed uninterruptedly to its close; and he has chided the same poet, and with very good reason, for putting in the mouths of simple and unlearned persons discourses of the kind that might more fittingly be pronounced by philosophers and consummate orators. Hence it seems a distortion of the facts to affirm that Euripides represented his characters as they were, though it may still be true that he did not represent them as they ought to be.

In the light of all this we may say that the persons met in poetic imitations are of three kinds: those who appear exactly as known to history or oral tradition, those who are represented as they ought to be, i.e., as possessing the characteristics proper to persons of their condition, and those who differ from both the first kind and the second. If this classification is sound, then Aristotle's and Sophocles' words must be interpreted in a different sense from the one so far offered, and we may say that Euripides altered and transformed the kinds of objects of imitation which the poet may freely alter and transform, and in so doing approximated the representation of things as they are, and that Sophocles by handling the same kind of objects in the same fashion approximated the representation of things as they ought to be, i.e., with due recognition of the dignity and grandeur of the royal personages and divine beings whom the poets portray in their tragedies.

* * * * *

[2.266] Some objects represented by the poets cannot be known precisely as they were or are and have not for that reason been represented as they ought to be but rather as "they are said to be" (25. 60b 35). Of this kind are the representations of divine actions. When the actions of the gods are so represented it is a sufficient defense of the poet to be able to say that he followed oral tradition and the accounts of them commonly current in his time. We may say, then, that of the actions of the gods told in poetry some are represented as they are said to be, i.e., they owe their being not to what is or ought to be but to tradition and to the accounts of them current among the people. Such are the miraculous actions of the pagan gods which we have termed "manifest," and these are the ones that Aristotle has in mind here. Others, on the other hand, are represented as they ought to be, owing their being neither to what is nor to what is said to be. These actions, which we have termed "hidden," are ignored by Aristotle. Such actions must necessarily be represented as they ought to be, and if they are not, the poet's lapse cannot be excused on the ground that he followed an oral tradition, for they are of the poet's own invention and had never been described before him. If it is true, as some assert, that the transformation of Aeneas' ships into nymphs was not known before Virgil and was invented by him, the fact tells us how justifiably he defends that episode (*Aen.* 9. 80-83), when he declares that he had received it from oral tradition (*fertur*). Hence neither the poets who have

invented their own matter nor those who have represented what they knew to be ascertained fact can say to defend themselves against their critics or for some other reason that their poems represent things as they are said to be; if they do, the former will be condemned, as Virgil must be, for mendacity, and the latter will be spurned as contemptible, for they have needlessly fobbed off what they know to be fact as mere hearsay. Comparable to the behavior of these latter is to my mind that of Aeneas' household gods (*Aen.* 3. 163-6), who appear to him in a dream and, though they know, being gods, how Italy received its name, prefer without reason to attribute their knowledge to oral tradition (*fama*). The same may also be said of Helenus (*Aen.* 3. 414-16), who though imbued with the divine spirit of Apollo, professes to repeat only what oral tradition reports (*ferunt*), as if he were not certain whether or not the Italian peninsula had once been joined to Sicily.

To gain a firmer understanding of this matter we must not neglect to add that poets have recourse to oral tradition sometimes to enhance and sometimes to diminish the credibility of some episode, and often to excuse themselves for representing things that seem to diverge from what is or ought to be. Sometimes the poet appeals to the testimony of what has been said or written as confirmation of the story he tells. Thus Petrarch (*Canz.* 128. 42-48) introduces a brief account of Marius' defeat of the Teutons with the words, "As we may read," as if to say, "What I tell is incontrovertible truth and is confirmed by history;" and Dante (*Inf.* 28. 7-13) supports his reference to the rings gathered from the Roman dead by Hannibal's forces after Cannae by giving Livy as his source ("As Livy writes, who does not err"). Sometimes a story is told so that it may be discredited and exposed as false. Thus Virgil (*Ecl.* 6. 74-77) prefaces his recital of the story of Nisus's daughter Scylla with the question, "Why should I tell this tale...?" thereby warning the reader that the tale as it has come down to him is false and not worthy of credence. The point is made plainly in the account of Scylla in his *Ciris* (48ff.), where he says, "But neither will the Homeric page induce us to believe this tale." Pindar follows the same course as Virgil in the first of his Olympian odes (42ff.), where he urges the rejection of the story of Pelops in the distorted form in which it had been received from antiquity, and having condemned it proceeds to offer it in a new version.... Finally poets acknowledge the use of traditional matter for the third reason: to warn the reader that it diverges so far from what is or ought to be that it may fairly be rejected as incredible. We may be convicted of exceeding the limits of truth unduly when we speak of what cannot be known except from hearsay, as, for instance, the joys of Heaven and the torments of Hell, or when we speak of things which, though the truth of them is ascertainable, are nevertheless far from credible and have the appearance of falsehood, failing, as they do, to correspond with what is commonly encountered in daily life.

Now let no one infer from Aristotle's words that a poet composing a narrative in his own person may, *qua* narrator, legitimately make use of matter in the form in which it is said to be the occasion for warning the reader that it is much less than wholly probable or appropriate and for clearing himself

of guilt for introducing it into his poem. To Aristotle's mind the poet may never defend himself in the poem itself, but only after it has been finished and he has been accused of some offense against the probable or the appropriate. The fact is that he need not formulate his own defense, for he has available to him certain expressions which he may and in fact should use when telling of things that are only slightly probable or appropriate, expressions such as *mirabile dictu*, *Eloquar an sileam*?⁹ and others like them. Petrarch (*Canz.* 23. 156) may here serve as a model in the line, "I will speak the truth (perhaps it will seem a falsehood)," and Dante (*Inf.* 16. 124-7) where he affirms that a man should never, if avoidable, permit himself to utter a truth that has the face of a falsehood, and concludes, "But here I cannot remain silent." We speak of these matters because, as we have already pointed out, when a poet relating some incident in his own person pauses to say that he is using it in the form in which it has come down to him and in which it is generally reported he accomplishes nothing but diminish the credibility of what he relates. On the other hand, what is not permitted to the poet is permitted to the historian, for it offers him the means of separating for the reader those parts of his history which he reports as true, and knows to be true, from those whose truth he cannot vouch for. Virgil, then, is not to be highly commended for frequently using expressions like "may it be in keeping with the gods' will for me to tell what I have heard" (*Aen.* 6. 264-6).

* * * * *

[2.271] So far Aristotle has offered three ways of answering objections to a poet's representation of his matter, all of them resting on the recognition of the assumption that poetry imitates things as they were or are, as they ought to be, or as they are said to be. He now (25. 60b 36-61a 1) adds a fourth, this based on the recognition that a poet may imitate something as it is "by chance"; that chance, disregarding all considerations of what really is or was or ought to be or is said to be, presents the thing as it is, and that when it has done so we remain uncertain that the thing is indeed as presented even though it truly is.¹⁰ This answer he owes to Xenophanes, who held that it is impossible to attain to authentic knowledge of anything and especially of divine things, and that if anyone ever uttered some truth about them he did so by chance and not because he knew his utterance to be true. Briefly, he believed that when anyone chanced to utter a divine truth he did what pagan soothsayers and prophets are said to have done and what Caiaphas actually did (John 11:47-52), all of whom unquestionably uttered truths but without understanding what they said or knowing that it was true.... Thus there are two kinds of truths: those which are inherently true and which the speaker of them recognizes as true and understands and those which though inherently true are neither recognized as such nor understood by the person who utters them. Truths of the first kind are akin to the first of the three answers to objections that may be raised against a poem (the poet imitates things as they are or were), those of the second kind are akin to a fourth answer, now advanced for the

first time, which is that poets may imitate a thing as it actually is not intentionally but "by chance." To be sure words which express a truth that the poet is not cognizant of and which do not represent their subject as it ought to be or as it is said to be can gain validity if they are found to be true by readers of a later time. (We have already referred to Seneca's prophecy of the discovery of the New World, which has been fulfilled in this age.) But the poet himself must not for that reason be applauded as one vindicated, for poets must never say or have any of their characters say anything without knowing why it is said and unless it has a basis in what is, or ought to be, or is said to be. This was the ground of our earlier condemnation of Boccaccio for an episode in his story of Kind Alfonso and the Florentine knight (*Dec.* 10. 1). The King desired to prove that the knight's failure to receive adequate reward for past services to him was due not to any lack of munificence on his part but to the knight's bad luck. Hence he had two locked coffers set before him, the one filled with earth, the other with a great treasure, and invited him to choose one, as if certain that he would choose the first and thus give clear proof of his contention. But the king's mad confidence had no basis in what was known to be or ought to be or was said to be true. To be sure, the event chanced to prove the king in the right; yet it was rashness on Boccaccio's part to represent him taking a risk that might have ended in his humiliation....

* * * * *

[2.274] We now (25. 61a 1-2) come to the answer to the fifth objection that may be raised against a poem, an answer which like the first four rests upon a consideration of the object imitated. The poet imitates not only what both he and the reader know to be true and what is known to be true to the reader and not to him, but also what he knows to be true and the reader does not.... Thus Homer (*Il.* 10. 152-3) writes that the spears of Diomedes' followers, who together with their leader were found asleep outside the camp, stood erect, the butt-ends in small, round iron sockets fixed in the ground,¹¹ so that in case of a surprise attack the enemy would have been upon them before they could have had to time to lower them. This scene fails to represent things truly because when an army is actually confronting the enemy or merely suspects that he may be on the way, it is customary to keep the spears leaning in the direction from which he is known or is suspected to be advancing; to violate this custom, as Diomedes' followers did, argues an imperfect mastery of the art of war, which so worthy a captain as Diomedes may be presumed to have possessed in its fullness.... Now when the truth of what he represents is known to the poet but not to the reader, who is prevented by his ignorance from seeing that the poet knows whereof he speaks, the truth of the poet's representation may be discovered by observing certain survivals of bygone usages. Thus Aristotle would have his contemporaries accept as true that in a former age it was indeed customary for sentinels to plant their spears upright in the ground even when strongly suspecting an attack (a custom known to Homer and imitated by him in the passage in question) because in his time

it was a known fact that the custom survived among the warlike Illyrians and was still followed by them in similar circumstances. Therefore we have no warrant for condemning the descriptions of such things in poetry as not reflecting what actually is, though we may condemn the custom in question as not conforming to what ought to be in warfare, and may withhold our approval from it as something of which we do not know for certain that it was practiced in Diomedes' time or again as something which has never been brought to our notice by oral tradition....

* * * * *

[2.275] Aristotle's division of the imitation of that which is or was into three species (the imitation of what is known to be or to have been to both the poet and the reader, to the reader alone, and to the poet alone) may be repeated for the imitations which represent their objects as they ought to be or are said to be. Thus imitations of things as they ought to be may represent their objects as both the poet and the reader believe they ought to be, or as they ought to be in the opinion of the poet and not the reader, or of the reader and not of the poet. But just as I have withheld my commendation from imitations of what the reader recognizes as things as they truly are and the poet does not, so I cannot but condemn imitations which accord with the reader's conception of what ought to be but not the poet's. [Thus it did not accord with Boccaccio's conception of what ought to be that in describing the pitiful sufferings of the stricken during the plague that raged shortly before he wrote the *Decameron* he should have omitted all mention of the fact that some victims died without having their confessions heard and receiving holy communion or extreme unction; yet to some readers of the present time Boccaccio's silence would accord with what ought to be, for recent years have seen the emergence of the doctrine that religious rites of any sort are unnecessary at death, and those readers would not believe that the omission of them is a deprivation of the kind to provoke pity.]¹²

Again imitations of things as they are said to be are also of three kinds: those which represent their objects as they are known from tradition both to the poet and the reader, or to the poet and not to the reader, or to the reader and not to the poet. Of these the third kind is unacceptable. Thus we cannot commend Virgil for making the lover's despair that possessed her following Aeneas' departure the cause of Dido's death.¹³ No such account of her death had come down to him from an earlier time; he invented it, rather, out of hand, and without justification, for Dido was a royal personage. (Today, however, Dido's suicide and its cause are a matter of common knowledge, thanks to Virgil's poem and many other poems besides.) On the other hand, we are not to condemn the kind of imitation that tells of what was known to the poet though it is unknown to the reader of a later time. Of this kind are certain fables found in some one poet and in no other, with the result that they have remained obscure and consequently unknown to us. The existence of such fables was recognized by Pier Vettori, who devoted a chapter to them in his *Variae Lec-*

tiones, though the method by which he sought to prove his point is unsound, as I have shown elsewhere.¹⁴

6

Impossibilities, Improbabilities, Contradictions

[2.328] Aristotle now (25. 61b 12-13) appeals to the example of the painter Zeuxis to demonstrate that the poet is at liberty to represent the impossible provided it proves to be better than the possible. Of Zeuxis he asserts that "men cannot possibly be as he painted them," his figures being better than their models. Thus though it is impossible for nature to produce a woman possessing every beauty, all feminine beauties are to be seen in the portrait of Helen which Zeuxis painted at the instance of the citizens of Croton and which they hung as an ornament in the Temple of Juno. Cicero (*De Inv.* 2. 1-3) accounts for Zeuxis' practice of perfecting nature's works by asserting that Zeuxis "never believed that all he sought of beauty could be found in a single body, nature having never produced anything perfect in every way. And as if fearing that she would find herself with no gifts left to bestow if she lavished them all upon one person, she bestows some perfections on one and some on another but always with the addition of some imperfection." Yet because Zeuxis' Helen was a portrayal of the female form as it ought to be, i.e., beautiful in the highest degree and consequently more beautiful than all possible human beauty, it received high praise and was never condemned for representing the impossible. A critic might have protested, "Nature cannot possibly produce human beings of such perfect beauty as those painted by Zeuxis." Aristotle suggests that an apologist might have replied, "Granted that nature can produce no such paragons; yet Zeuxis does well to paint the human form as he does because it would be better if it were as beautiful as he represents it, just as the poet will do well to represent things as better than they are even though they cannot possibly be as he represents them."

* * * * *

[2.329] There are some who interpret Aristotle's remark (25. 61b 13-14) that poets and painters "must excel the model" to mean that they imitate their objects as they ought to be and render them more excellent than they in fact are or can be because they intend them to serve as exemplars upon which men may model their actions or as revelations in which they may recognize the perfection of beauty.¹ Now though I do not deny that the words in question are susceptible of this interpretation, yet it would be profitable at this point to recall that on an earlier page Aristotle told how portrait painters keep at

home or in their minds models of perfect beauty which they contemplate as they paint some beautiful man or woman, making him or her as like the model as possible, and that he counseled good tragic poets to follow their example, fashioning perfect ideas of wrath, mildness, or other virtues or vices that might serve them as models when giving suitable characteristics to their tragic personages.² With this in mind we cannot but believe that Aristotle is here referring to these models, observing that it need occasion no wonder that Zeuxis portrayed men and women as more beautiful than they are or can naturally be, for as he painted he contemplated not the sitter so as to portray him as he was but the model of perfect beauty which he kept at home or in his mind and which, like all such models, must surpass the beauty generally met with among men, otherwise they would serve no useful purpose since men can be represented as they are. This I believe to be Aristotle's true meaning even though it appears from the story Cicero tells that when he undertook to paint the figure of Helen Zeuxis did not possess a model of supreme beauty at home or in his mind, otherwise he would not have demanded to be shown all the young women of Croton that he might select the most beautiful five from among them and then paint a Helen that would embody the most beautiful features of each. Whether it is probable that painters and poets have such models and are well served by them as they paint or compose poetry or that they intend their productions to furnish patterns of virtuous action or revelations of perfect beauty — these are questions which I will not consider further here, having already discussed them at sufficient length.

* * * * *

[2.330] We now (25. 61b 14–15) come to the second kind of objections, the kind raised against what appears to be contrary to reason, i.e., improbable. These objections might be met in a number of ways, but Aristotle limits himself to two, not because to his mind only two are possible, but because his intention, as we have already said, is to show *how* objections to any of a poem's shortcomings are to be met and not to furnish an exhaustive list of the ways to meet them.³ Both the answers he treats in this passage are included in those treated further back as composing answers of the first kind, and both of them point to the fact that an object may be imitated "as it is said to be" or "as it is." Thus when, for example, a poet's utterance about the gods has the appearance of an improbability, the objection to it can be effectively met if one can say in all truth, "This is as it is said to be" ... Again, when the poet seems to be representing an improbability because the thing he relates occurs but rarely — Aristotle found examples of this in the clever rogue (some one like Sisyphus) who succumbed to deception and in the powerful but unjust man who was discomfited — we can answer any objection raised by invoking Agathon's dictum that it is probable even for improbabilities to occur....

* * * * *

[2.331] The third kind of objections (25. 61b 15-18) consist of those called "contradictions" because they are brought against the poet who says or has one of his characters say things that seem to be contradictory....⁴ Aristotle holds that the method to be followed to clear the poet of the charge of contradiction is the same as that followed to clear a prose writer of the same charge, be he a disputant, an orator, or some one else..., and consists in considering first the apparent contradiction and then its author. One begins by considering whether the contradictory statements are made about the same thing, for if they are not there is no ground for the charge of contradiction. If they are, one should consider whether they both stand in the same relation to that thing, for if they do not there is no contradiction. If they are made about the same thing and bear the same relation to it, one should consider whether they are meant in the same sense, for if they are not the apparent contradiction is not real. Having done all this one proceeds to the consideration of whether the apparently contradictory statements about the same thing, standing in the same relation to it, and intended in the same sense were made by the same person, for if they were not there is no contradiction. If they are both made by the same person, one should consider whether he intended the same thing in both, for if he did not there is no contradiction. Finally if the author of both statements is the same person speaking of the same thing, one should consider whether he expresses his own thought or another's, for if the thought is not his own the contradiction disappears. All this is what Aristotle seems to mean (when he says: "Contradictions in the poet's thoughts are to be refuted in the same manner as those in prose discourses: one should inquire whether they are about the same thing, bear the same relation to that thing, and are intended in the same sense; thus [the refuter considers] the things he himself says or what a wise man would assume to be true.")⁵ But perhaps this discussion of the matter might have been compressed into the following proposition: When dealing with an apparent contradiction one should consider whether the things meant are the same as regards their substance or accidents and likewise whether the speaker of those statements is the same as regards his substance and accidents, for the discovery of a change in substance or accidents resolves the apparent contradiction. All that Aristotle says here, all that has been said above, and all that may be said on the subject of how to clear a poet of the charge of contradiction is reducible to the distinction just made between the substance and the accidents of proposition or speaker....

* * * * *

[2.333] Now though the interpretation of Aristotle's text that I have just offered is not at all shunned by the commentators,⁶ I very much doubt that I have succeeded in expounding the idea Aristotle had in mind, for his method of testing an apparent contradiction does not seem to be that of considering first the apparently contradictory statement and then its author. The fact is that the word *thus*, which introduces the second clause in the sentence quoted

above, clearly indicates that the idea that follows it issues from something previously said and is not to be taken as separating that idea from what precedes it. Then, too, if the would-be refuter of an apparent contradiction is to be instructed that before making a judgment he must consider whether the poet speaks in his own person in one place and in the person of some one else in the other, what need is there to say that he must consider what is said by the poet or what would be assumed to be true by a wise man? Is the poet always a fool? And are the words put in the mouth of some one not the author invariably those of a wise man? Yet even though it is much easier to show that our interpretation does not truly grow out of Aristotle's text than to discover the true one, I nevertheless believe it to be the following. To test an apparent contradiction Aristotle would have us first consider three and only three things: whether the contradictory statements are made about the same thing; if they are, whether they both stand in the same relation to it; if they are about the same thing and stand in the same relation to it, whether they are meant in the same sense. From this he draws the conclusion that the person who accuses a poet of a contradiction should examine his own statement concerning the apparent contradiction or the assumption of a wise man, i.e., the poet himself, who assumes that there is no contradiction, knowing that the apparently contradictory statements are not made about the same things, or do not stand in the same relation to the same thing, or are not intended in the same sense. It is as if he were saying, "If the critic does not apply these tests to the apparent contradiction, his objection will be unintelligent; if he does apply them he will conduct his refutation like a wise man, with the result that his objection will be well founded and will stand as unanswerable."

* * * * *

[2.334] Believing that he has taught the reader the correct way to criticize the poet on the score of some total contradiction, Aristotle makes what he has just done the occasion for teaching him (25. 61b 19-20) the correct way to criticize him on the score of some improbability. "Criticisms against improbabilities and depravities," he says, "are justifiable when these are found to be unnecessary and gratuitous." This statement prompts one to ask whether "the improbable" is as the genus and "the depraved" as a species, or whether "the improbable" and "the depraved" are as two species of "objection," their genus. For the improbability may result from the attribution of goodness to a bad man as well as from the attribution of depravity to a good one, and from the attribution not only of goodness or depravity but of actions or other things to persons to whom they are not suitable. Hence it would seem necessary to conclude that depravity is a species of improbability. Aristotle spoke of it as a notable improbability when he declared that it was a strange thing for a poet to create an example of improbable depravity and thus commit an inexcusable error. On the other hand depravity seems to be like improbability a distinct species of objection, both because Aristotle gives separate examples of them, and because it seems to be his opinion that improbability of character is a different thing from improbability of plot.

Before we can make what appears to be Aristotle's meaning as clear as possible and at the same time cast sufficient light on the ideas I am myself advancing and on the observations that will be made shortly, it must be recognized as fact that of the errors that may be committed by the poet four genera of them are major and four minor or adventitious. The first genus of major errors consists of those which ruin or mar the plot, and they result from the poet's failure to observe the laws established to guide him in its construction. We have already shown that the perfect plot fulfills eight requirements, so that offenses against it and the critical objections they give rise to might be divided into eight species and be included in this first genus. The first genus of what we have termed minor or adventitious errors consists of those which ruin or mar the particulars invented to flesh out the plot, and they seem to have been reduced by Aristotle to three species; the impossible, the improbable, and the contradictory. Of these I shall say no more. The second genus of major errors consists of those committed in assigning characteristics to tragic personages. Thus if a truly tragic agent is a person of ordinary virtue, Euripides blundered in making the Menelaus of his *Orestes* wicked, for depravity cannot arouse pity or fear, and it is to arouse these emotions that the tragic agent is endowed with such and such characteristics. We have seen that Aristotle divided errors of this kind into four species (15. 54a 16-36). The second genus of minor errors consists of those which mar not the substance but the accidents of a character. Such errors rob the character of probability or of self-consistency. The traits given by Euripides to his Menelaus are errors of this kind, for it is not probable that an uncle would conduct himself as Menelaus did to his nephew, and they do not accord with the other traits of Menelaus' character. Hence Menelaus' depravity belongs in the second genus of major errors and in the second genus of minor ones. Those of the former genus pervert the effect which a tragic agent should normally produce in an audience. Those of the latter are errors in themselves, but are useful to the plot, for if Menelaus had been a good man the plot would have been an inferior one and would have lacked a memorable action. Hence Aristotle's contention that Euripides made Menelaus more wicked than necessary is defensible in so far as the wickedness modifies the effect of the character on the audience. But Menelaus is not too wicked for the plot; in fact the plot demanded a Menelaus as wicked as Euripides has made him. The third genus of major errors consists in giving inappropriate thoughts to the characters. This charge has been brought against Euripides, and we have ourselves said something on the subject. The third genus of minor errors consists of those errors in the handling of the thoughts that are shown to be such by the masters of the art of rhetoric. The fourth and last genus of major errors consists in the less than perfectly vivid imitation of the object. Aristotle calls them errors in the art of poetry. In our opinion the degree of vividness attained in the imitation of an object results from the skilful or unskilful handling of the language. The fourth and last genus of minor errors also results from the unskilful handling of language, but consists of errors in grammar, in metrics, in figures of speech, and in similar matters. Now it appears that Aristotle would or could subsume the first three

genera of major errors under the term "marring," the major errors of the fourth genus under "errors in the art itself," and the minor errors of the second genus under "the impossible, the improbable, and the contradictory." Thus with him all the errors taken together constitute five genera (25. 61b 22-24) but should constitute eight, as they do with us. What is more, his procedure does not square with his intention; for his division of the second genus of minor errors into three and his grouping the three genera of major errors into one indicates that in his opinion the three genera which form one are three and that the one genus which forms three is one.

* * * * *

[2.336] Having said that poets may be justly censured when the presence of the improbable and the depraved in their poems is found to be needless and gratuitous, Aristotle now (25. 61b 21-22) condemns Euripides for the improbability of his Aegeus and the depravity of his Menelaus. The text of the first of these examples is unquestionably corrupt, and as a result we are unable to tell which of Euripides' tragedies Aristotle has in mind. But until we find a tragedy that suits the context better than his *Medea* we may believe that the thing he is censuring is the recklessness and folly of the Aegeus there.... We may then emend and paraphrase the text thus: "We may justly condemn a character's folly or depravity when the one or the other is attributed to him without reference to the needs of the poem.... A poet may be said to make a gratuitous attribution of folly or depravity when he does so in the manner in which Euripides attributes folly to Aegeus in his *Medea* and depravity to Menelaus in his *Orestes*." It must be noted that if the ἀλογία of Aristotle's text is the quality displayed by Aegeus in the *Medea*, we are to take the word in the sense of recklessness and folly, and in fact almost in the sense of stupidity, not in that of improbability, as we have done hitherto.⁸ Moreover the word must be taken to refer to character and not to plot. And where, indeed, can greater recklessness be met than Aegeus', who on a visit to Corinth, the home of his great friend Jason, who had just taken a new bride, and of Creon, a great king, brings himself to believe solely on the strength of Medea's testimony and with never a word to either Jason or Creon all that Medea relates to the prejudice of those very great men and madly offers her sanctuary in his own city, thus unwittingly enabling her to proceed without fear of consequences with the perpetration of the horrible crime she was then contemplating? We may conclude, then, that Aristotle holds it a reprehensible and quite inexcusable error to attribute virtues or vices, and especially vices, to dramatic personages to whom they are unsuited when they are not of a kind to produce the effect that they should in a poem. Thus stupidity is not a suitable vice for Aegeus, who was king of Athens, nor moral depravity a suitable one for Menelaus, though the plots of *Medea* and *Orestes* are well served by both vices....

Part VII

Whether Epic Poetry or Tragedy is the Superior Type

I

Epic Poetry to be Ranked above Tragedy

[2.343] Aristotle now offers (26. 61b 26–62a 4) two reasons for ranking epic poetry above tragedy. The first is that epic poetry is the less toilsome of the two and the second that it appeals to the more cultivated audience.¹

1a

Epic Poetry is Less Toilsome than Tragedy

[2.343] There can be no doubt whatever that of two equally well-made things the one produced with less toil is to be more highly esteemed. Since epic poetry is pronounced by Aristotle to be less toilsome than tragedy, we will now inquire into his use of the terms "more" and "less." We may consider these two species of poetry either as things that expose themselves to public view, epic poetry from a platform and tragedy from a stage, or as things apprehended by the public, epic poetry being only heard and tragedy both heard and seen. If we consider them in the first manner there can be no doubt that tragedy is the more toilsome of the two, for besides requiring a larger financial outlay (too large for a private purse), it requires also a theatre, a stage, costumes, masks, and actors as well as bodily movements and gestures and the use of the voice, not to mention music, singing, and dancing and the persons who make music, sing, and dance—all of which epic poetry can dispense with except for the one person to recite it and a little skill in the management of the body and the voice. If we consider them in the second manner we observe that their public consists of two kinds of persons, the intelligent and learned and the simple and ignorant and that the former will inevitably find tragedy to be much more vexing and fatiguing than the epic, being unable to tolerate the great use made by tragedy of speech and bodily movement to give expression to what epic poetry could narrate in few words. Hence it appears that of the two tragedy is by far the more toilsome in itself and the more fatiguing in its effect upon a cultivated audience. And if it is argued that the ignorant find the performance of tragedy less fatiguing than a recital of epic poetry

because tragedy offers so many helps to the understanding that they can apprehend it without difficulty, whereas they cannot apprehend epic poetry without effort and fatigue, the answer is that the fatigue experienced by the cultivated is in this matter of greater account than that experienced by the ignorant. It would appear, then, that Aristotle attempts to prove that tragedy is more toilsome than epic poetry with two arguments: that it requires a larger financial outlay and a greater expenditure of toil to set before the public and that it is more fatiguing for the audience. And if tragedy has been thus proved to be more toilsome than epic poetry it follows, as he believes, that it has been proved to be the inferior species of poetry.

Before we take the next step let us inquire whether Aristotle's assumptions are really true. (1) A thing made naturally (i.e., without resort to acquired knowledge and skills) is less toilsome than one made by art. (2) A thing made for the uncultivated is less toilsome than one made for the cultivated. (3) A thing reproduced with matter very like its original is less toilsome than one reproduced with matter unlike its original. Now once it is recognized that the theatrical performances of the kind that set tragedies before our eyes are (1) natural, (2) best adapted to the uncultivated, and (3) consisting of matter similar to that of the thing represented (for when the very young, the mute, and the uncultivated undertake to report something they have seen happen they reenact it with words, gestures, signs, bodily movements, and by other means bearing a close resemblance to the things witnessed, whereas the cultivated, being conversant with the art of narration, report it by no other means than that of language), who can deny that the performance of a tragedy, in so far as it is a thing seen, is less fatiguing to follow than the recital of an epic poem? Further, of two things seen, that which is intellectually less taxing must be judged less fatiguing than that which is more so. Therefore the performance of a tragedy, which, as a thing seen, puts no strain on the intellect since each one of its constituent parts appears on the stage as it is known to be in the world, is less fatiguing than the recital of an epic poem, which, though a thing seen, is intellectually taxing because it represents every element of its story with the single medium of language, through which the intellect apprehends the action by its own strenuous exertions. Tragic performances, then, are less toilsome than recitals of epic poetry for those who produce them and less fatiguing for those who see and hear them. And it is well to add that in forming our final judgment we need not take into account the large outlay of money required by the theatre, the stage, the scenery, the costumes, and all the other accessories as well as the expenditure of toil that goes into the acting and the speaking of the lines. As we have seen, these constitute no part of the poet's art, and the financial outlay they entail does not necessarily come out of the poet's purse. Now, it is not true that where poetic imitations are concerned the displeasure of the cultivated public should be given greater weight than the pleasure of the ignorant, for as we have already shown poetry was invented for the pleasure of the ignorant multitude and the common people and not for that of the learned. Nor is it true that the latter take no pleasure in gestures and bodily movements, which are more freely

used in the performance of tragedy than in the recitation of epic poetry; when gesture and movement are well suited to the thoughts, emotions, etc. being represented they contemplate it with the greatest pleasure, and they win their admiration and their praise....

* * * * *

[2.345] Aristotle says (26.61b 28–29) that “it is evident that whatever imitates all things is toilsome.” Tragedy imitates all things with similar things (i.e., words with words and things with things), whereas epic poetry imitates only words with similar words, for it imitates things with words, which are different from the things they imitate, and in so far as it imitates with something different from the thing imitated its kind of imitation cannot properly be called imitation. Therefore considering that total imitation imitates with things similar to the things imitated, epic poetry cannot be said to imitate all things.

* * * * *

[2.346] Aristotle now (26. 61b 30–32) introduces an example to make his meaning clearer and to show the difference between epic poetry and tragedy in their use of movement. The example is that of the good and bad flute-players. Good flute-players do not indulge in bodily movement. The production of sound is their only activity, and the meaning of their music is understood by nothing more than the sound that issues from their instruments; epic poetry likewise eschews all movement or other aid and conveys the story it tells solely by means of its language. And as inferior flute-players in addition to making musical sounds indulge in gestures and contortions of all sorts to convey the meaning of their music, so tragedy must make use of movement, gesture, and much else besides language to make the things it represents both visible and audible. Now it is to be borne in mind that the example of the two flute-players is not meant by Aristotle to serve any other purpose than that of demonstrating that epic poetry reaches its audience through language alone and tragedy by other means as well. Its purpose is not to prove that tragedy or epic poetry is either good or bad, for the performance of a tragedy without gestures and other bodily movements would not win the same approval as a flute-player who holds his body still. On the other hand we praise the recitation of an epic poem in which the reciter stands motionless because it is the nature of epic poetry to eschew bodily movement, as it is also that of flute-playing. But to return to the example itself. When the music of the flute represents a whirling object like a discus, the bad flute-player will twist and turn as he plays the instrument.... When it imitates something that pulls some person or thing to itself, he pulls at whatever happens to be near. Thus when he imitates Scylla, who sucks in and swallows ships and sailors, he seizes the leader of the chorus and pulls at him to give a visible demonstration of Scylla's action....

* * * * *

[2.347] The words, "Such, then, is tragedy" (26. 61b 32-33) may look back to the idea that tragedy is toilsome as being similar to the bad flute-player, or forward to one to be advanced presently, that tragedy stands in the same relation to epic poetry as bad actors to the good. Aristotle, then, did not consider the first example sufficient to define the difference between tragedy and epic poetry, for he now offers a second, saying that epic poetry is like good actors, who use only the necessary gestures and movements, and tragedy like bad actors, who are like apes in that they use more gestures and movements than necessary. This example shows which of these two species of poetry requires more bodily activity; it does not at all prove that because it requires much of it tragedy is therefore an inferior type of poetry, for as we have already said the nature of tragedy is such that it cannot be represented in its perfection without a great many gestures and other bodily movements....

* * * * *

[2.348] According to Aristotle (26. 61b 33-34) epic poetry should regard tragedy "as the first actors regarded those who came after them." Aristotle's "first" may be taken to mean "first in time" or "first in excellence." If we choose to take it as "first in time" we must assume that the earlier actors were content with fewer bodily movements than the later; if as "first in excellence" the assumption must be that in this matter they observed a suitable moderation that was disregarded by their successors. But since that moderation is a mean between extremes, it follows that the later actors might have been at fault for making too few movements as well as too many. In this passage, however, Aristotle entertains only the possibility of their making too many, and hence the example is not wholly suited to the demonstration he undertook to make....

* * * * *

[2.349] Aristotle now (26. 61b 34-62a 1) tells precisely what the first actors thought of their successors and names one of the former and two of the latter. The first actors, he says—he names Mynniscus—regarded themselves as men and their successors—he names Callipides and Pindarus—as apes, believing that the quantitative difference between their movements and those of their successors was as great as that between the movements of men and of apes. (The Pindarus just named is not the lyric poet.) From this it is concluded that tragedy is inferior to epic poetry to the same extent as apes are to men....

ib

Epic Poetry Requires the More Cultivated Audience

[2.349] The second reason for ranking epic poetry above tragedy (26. 62a 2-4) is that it requires the more cultivated audience, and being more cultivated its audience can apprehend the epic action without the aid of many bodily

movements and gestures, which the viewers of tragedy, being less cultivated, cannot do without. Now I admit that those who attend recitations of epic poetry are more cultivated than those who attend tragic performances, but I cannot admit that epic poetry refrains from bodily movement because it has the more cultivated audience. I believe, rather, that it is because it requires no such movement that it draws the intellectually superior audience and repels the ignorant. I admit also that the more cultivated public can dispense with bodily movement; but this does not lead me to conclude that epic poetry is therefore superior to tragedy or that the cultivated will not enjoy a tragedy as much as an epic or that those who possess the intelligence to understand an epic are as a class capable of understanding a tragic performance in which all bodily movement has been suppressed. Nor do I believe that epic poetry makes no use of movement because its audience possesses the intelligence to apprehend the action without it, for it is rather because it makes no use of movement that it requires that kind of audience. And this need of a cultivated audience tends to make it inferior rather than superior to tragedy....

2

Arguments for Superiority of Epic Poetry Refuted

[2.351] Aristotle now (25. 62a 5–14) undertakes to refute the arguments just advanced for ranking epic poetry above tragedy and at the same time offers his own arguments for ranking tragedy above epic poetry. Epic poetry was adjudged superior to tragedy for two reasons: it is the less toilsome of the two, and it requires the more cultivated audience. Aristotle's answer to the first is that though tragedy is admittedly the more toilsome type in so far as it cannot be performed without physical activity, yet that activity regarded as a fault must be seen as one inherent in the histrionic art and not in the art of poetry and must not therefore be accounted as a factor that makes tragedy more toilsome than epic poetry. He next points out that toil is necessary to the performance of both tragedy and epic poetry and cannot therefore be invoked as proof that either is to be ranked above the other. Finally he denies that the toil requisite to the perfection of an art is indeed toil and concludes that the toil required by tragedy must not be considered greater than that required by epic poetry. The answer to the second argument is that the audience required by tragedy is no less cultivated than that required by epic poetry, as the reading of a tragedy requires neither more nor less bodily activity and neither more nor less apparatus than the reading of an epic.¹

2a

Tragedy Not More Toilsome than Epic Poetry

[2.352] To gain a somewhat better understanding of these refutations we must bear in mind that tragedy can be said to be made toilsome by the histrionic art in two ways: by requiring that art, which includes spectacle and music (i.e. instrumental music, singing, and dancing),¹ to attain its own perfection, a requirement that must be seen as a burden even when the performance is faultless, and by being further burdened when the performance is faulty. If the performance is faulty its faults are to be attributed not to tragedy but to the histrionic art; if, on the other hand, tragedy is made a toilsome thing by the mere fact that it must be staged to attain its perfection, the fault is to be attributed not to the histrionic art but to tragedy, and, tragedy being a species of poetry, to the art of poetry. The first of these propositions forms the basis of the first two refutations and the second of the third. It is well to note here that when Aristotle asserted that tragedy may be considered more toilsome than epic poetry because unlike epic poetry it cannot dispense with performance he seemed to have meant that and no more, not implying that tragedy is to be charged also with such errors as may be committed in the performance of tragic drama. Yet one of his answers assumes that tragedy is more toilsome than epic poetry for both reasons....

* * * * *

[377B, 686] Aristotle's second reply (26. 62a 6-8) to those who would rank tragedy below epic poetry because it could be burdened with lapses in the performance of it is that the burden in question is no greater for tragedy than for epic poetry since rhapsodes too can mar a performance "by indulging, like Sosistratus, in too many gestures and, like Mnasisheus, delivering too many passages in song."² In this reply Aristotle clearly assumes that spectacle and music are parts of epic poetry since he admits the possibility of a rhapsodist's lapsing into error both as actor and singer an admission that relieves tragedy of the burden of being uniquely vulnerable to errors in those arts and contradicts what he has already said and will soon repeat, that spectacle and music are not parts of epic poetry. It should be said here that the reason epic poetry has so far been said to be unburdened with spectacle and music is that unlike tragedy it has slight need of those arts, for the recitation of an epic poem manifests no more than what is contained in the language, which embodies its plot and all its other elements, while in the performance of a tragedy the spectacle and the music manifest elements of the total work not contained in its language. But if the histrionic art is so tenuously related to epic poetry that it is not thought of as one of its integral parts, why does Aristotle insist that errors committed in the performance of it are no less burdensome to it than those committed in the performance of tragedy, which cannot dispense with actors and musicians? Again, Aristotle has said that excessive gesturing

and the delivery of too many passages in song are to be frowned upon in epic recitations, and he has named Sosistratus as guilty of the first offense and Mnasiheus of the second. To which we may add that for a performer to make fewer gestures and do less singing than the action calls for would be equally blameworthy.

* * * * *

[2.353] Aristotle now (26. 62a 8–11) refutes the argument that tragedy is more toilsome than epic poetry because unlike epic poetry it cannot dispense with the histrionic art. "We should not condemn all movement," he asserts, "nor yet all dancing, but only that of the wicked."³ In other words, the histrionic art must not be considered a burden to tragedy unless it is made one by faulty execution, just as the art of dancing cannot rightly be held to be a burden except when it is made one by lapses in the art. Now in my view no one can fail to see how wide of the mark this refutation is, for the point at issue is not whether the art of representation as such is or is not a burdensome thing, in which case it could be argued that it is when marred by faulty execution and is not when the execution is faultless, but whether tragedy bears a heavier burden than epic poetry for the reason that it cannot dispense with that art and epic poetry can. At first blush it seems undeniable that tragedy is the more heavily burdened, bearing the histrionic art as excess weight; on the other hand it can be argued that that art does not constitute a burden, seeing that it makes possible the manifestation of certain elements of the total tragedy that cannot be manifested by the language, which in epic poetry is sufficient to manifest the poem in all its elements. For tragedy, then, performance does not constitute excess weight, but is, rather, one of its necessary elements and is the counterpart of public recitation in epic poetry. And because performance makes possible a clearer manifestation of the total tragedy, it follows that as we seek to determine which of the two species of poetry is to be ranked above the other we should not only refrain from condemning it as a weight that bears down on tragedy but regard it, rather, as something that gives it lightness. This, and not Aristotle's, is the correct refutation....

2b

Tragedy Requires the More Cultivated Audience

[2.355] Aristotle now (26. 62a 11–13) gives his answer to the second reason for judging epic poetry superior to tragedy, which is that epic poetry requires the more cultivated audience because it can be recited without spectacle and music. The answer to this is that tragedy can no less than epic poetry be apprehended "without movement," i.e., without spectacle and music, by being simply read and that consequently its public is no less cultivated than that of epic poetry. Yet we must deny that tragedy like epic poetry can produce

its proper effect by being simply read and without benefit of spectacle and bodily movement, for tragedy was designed for the pleasure of both the learned and the ignorant and was adapted to the understanding of both. But it can reach both with great ease only when it is represented on the stage with all the aids that the stage can offer; the reading of it gives no pleasure at all to the ignorant, who fail to apprehend it, and gives only slight pleasure to the cultivated. This is also the opinion of Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 11. 3. 4), who has this to say on the subject: "A proof of this is offered by actors on the stage, who add so much charm to the lines of even the best poets that we enjoy the same piece infinitely more when heard than when read; they in fact win a hearing even for the most worthless authors, so that though these have no place in the library they often have one in the theatre." And indeed how can tragedy be completely apprehended by the ignorant reader when the text of a tragic drama offers him only three of its constituent parts—thought, character, and language—and withholds the most important, namely, the plot, which must be imagined and supplied by the reader, who obviously cannot do so unless he is endowed with a penetrating and searching intellect?¹ But whether heard or read epic poetry can by means of its language alone set the poem in its entirety—plot, thought, character, and language—before the hearer's or reader's mind, and no one need exert himself to imagine or invent anything not explicitly in the text. For this reason the ignorant form part of the total public for epic poetry and are capable of understanding it, though perhaps the cultivated form a greater and more understanding portion of the public, since the action and the plot of epic poetry, like the rest of its constituent parts, must be apprehended through its language alone. Hence tragedy cannot produce—as epic poetry produces—its proper effect when read, and it is not true that it cannot be understood but by readers of the degree of cultivation required of the readers of epic poetry. For the fact is that the readers it requires must be of a higher degree of cultivation, and because of this it is the more burdensome species for its audiences. This conclusion runs clean contrary to the one Aristotle seems to have arrived at above, that a given species of poetry is less burdensome the more cultivation it requires of its public.

3

Tragedy to be Ranked above Epic Poetry

[2.356] Aristotle's next statement (26. 62a 13–14) constitutes at once a reply to those who would rank epic poetry above tragedy because the latter requires the more movement and an intimation of the reasons why tragedy may be ranked above epic poetry. The reply may be paraphrased thus: "Granted that tragedy is more burdened with movement than epic poetry and cannot pro-

duce its proper effect without it, so that in this one respect it is indeed inferior to epic poetry, yet it ought not for this one reason alone to be ranked below it, since, as we shall presently see, it is superior to it in all other respects. For though inferior in one respect it is superior in many, and if superior in many it need not necessarily be superior in that one respect to be ranked above epic poetry...." This reply has no great validity unless it is reinforced by other considerations, for the one thing in which tragedy is inferior may well be of greater weight than all the others in which it enjoys a superiority....

3a

It Is Quantitatively Superior

[2.356] Tragedy may be superior to epic poetry in two respects: because those things which it shares with it are superior to the corresponding things in epic poetry and because it has a number of things which epic poetry lacks. Before Aristotle names the things in tragedy which are superior to those in epic poetry he names the things found in the former that are lacking in the latter. Tragedy, he asserts (26. 62a 14–62b 12), consists of plot, character, thought, and language, all of which it shares with epic poetry, and, in addition, of music and spectacle, which epic poetry lacks. Further, tragedy may be apprehended in two ways, by being read and by being seen, whereas epic poetry may be apprehended only by being read. Tragedy, therefore, is quantitatively superior to epic poetry. Aristotle then goes on to name three things to which it owes its qualitative superiority: a plot that is both shorter and more truly unified and offers a more vigorous purgation of the passions (this third consideration is not introduced until later). Tragedy, then, is superior to epic poetry in five respects, each of which we will consider separately. But at this point some one might object that though tragedy is indeed constituted, as Aristotle has said, of all the things found in epic poetry and more, it may still be inferior to epic poetry because thanks to the epic metre the language of epic poetry has a magnificence denied to that of tragedy. To this Aristotle replies that though tragedy does not make use of the epic metre nothing forbids it to adopt it at pleasure. A second critic might grant this and might even point out that the hexameter line is used by Seneca in two passages in his *Oedipus* (233–34; 403–4) and in one in his *Medea* (110–117). But, he might add, in those passages the epic metre was adopted for special reasons: one of them reports a response of the Pythoness at Delphi, who more often than not delivered her responses in hexameter verse (not invariably, for Aristides¹ in his encomium on Seradipelus asserts that she sometimes delivered them in prose), the other is a chorus, and since choruses are sung and not spoken they may lawfully be composed in metres of all kinds. But when these reasons cease to operate tragedy cannot, without forfeiting our approval, make use of the epic metre, whereas epic poetry uses it in every line. And though a messenger or some other *persona* is sometimes introduced in a tragedy to report an incident that

has occurred elsewhere and we might reasonably expect him to speak lines in the metre appropriate to narrative poetry, the fact is that his speech is invariably in the iambic metre. It is therefore not true that in the magnificence of its language, in so far as that is produced by the metre, tragedy is the equal of epic poetry even though it may make legitimate use of the epic metre in one or more of its parts.

* * * * *

[2.358] Aristotle names music and the spectacle (26. 62a 15-16) as a double possession of tragedy denied to epic poetry, adding that they are not "small things" nor of small account. Now, that tragedy enjoys an advantage over epic poetry in having music as one of its constituent parts is an undeniable fact, but only if we insist that music is indispensable to its proper representation. If, however, music is in fact an adventitious part of tragic representations, being neither required by their very nature nor peculiar to them, and could no less suitably than in tragic representations be introduced at pleasure to accompany the recitation of epic poetry, it not only ceases to be something of no small account but becomes a thing of no account whatever. It is also undeniable that tragedy has spectacle as another of its constituent parts and that like music it is neither a small thing nor a thing of small account; what *can* be denied is that in having it tragedy has something of which epic poetry is deprived. We have already shown that the spectacle is a constituent part of tragedy and that its peculiar function is to make the plot visible and audible. In epic poetry the plot is manifested by language alone. Therefore it cannot be said that tragedy possesses something, a means of manifesting itself, denied to epic poetry, but only that that something is different: it has a stage, actors, and actions in place of language; epic poetry has language....²

3b

It Has a Shorter Plot

[2.359] Aristotle now (26. 62a 18-62b 3) discusses the first thing by which tragedy achieves a qualitative superiority over epic poetry. Tragedy, he asserts, is superior to epic poetry "for attaining the end of imitation with less length."¹ In other words, tragedy has a shorter plot than epic poetry, and having a shorter plot, one necessarily limited to the space of twelve hours, the pleasure it affords is greater than it would be if the plot were spread over a much greater period of time. Sophocles' *Oedipus*, for instance, which affords very great pleasure because it is compressed into a few hours, would afford only slight pleasure if it were expanded to fill as many lines as the *Iliad*. Aristotle here assumes as simple truth that a plot gives the greater pleasure the shorter the space of time in which it is restricted. But that is not always so. If the whole of the *Iliad*, for instance, were compressed into a tragedy of the usual length it would

afford less pleasure than it does in its present form, with its action extending over many days and many lines. The reason for this is the obvious one that the poet would have been restrained by the limitations of the human mind from devoting his full attention to each of the many things simultaneously, just as he would have been restrained by the necessity of keeping within narrow time limits from expanding the parts of his story to the point where they could have yielded their due pleasure. This accounts for the fact that an action as rich in incident as the Theban war fails to win our admiration when reduced to a single tragedy, to say nothing of the improbability that results from crowding its many actions into the space of a single day. And, even if it were true, as Aristotle holds, that an *Oedipus* extended to the length of an *Iliad* would not afford as much pleasure as it does in its shorter form, that fact would not make tragedy superior to epic poetry. For epic poetry is not guilty of the error which Aristotle seems to impute to it of diffusing a small quantity of pleasure through many lines; the pleasure inherent in its long plot is commensurate with the great number of its lines, which considering the magnitude of the plot are proportionately no more numerous than the smaller number required by a tragedy. If, then, it was Aristotle's intention to prove that tragedy was to be ranked above epic poetry for having the shorter plot, he should have undertaken to prove that the small pleasure offered by a small thing is to be more highly prized than the great pleasure of a large one whose parts offer no less pleasure than those of the smaller. This would have been analogous to proving that the pleasure afforded by a glass of excellent wine is to be prized more highly than that afforded by a flask of wine of the same excellent quality. But I fail to see how he could have succeeded in proving this....

3c

It Has a More Strictly Unified Plot

[2.361] The second thing in tragedy that is superior to the corresponding thing in epic poetry (26. 62b 3-5) is a plot that is truly one, a plot that meets all the requirements that have been laid down for its unity and has been developed to fill a space of the appropriate dimensions. The same cannot be said of the epic plot, for any and every epic plot that meets the requirements of its kind can supply matter for several tragic plots. If, in fact, an epic plot should, like a tragic plot, be truly one and unable to supply several plots, it would have to be condemned as too short and as not meeting the requirements of epic metre and epic length, or having been developed to a length appropriate to the epic poem would have to be judged as a small quantity of good wine that has been made to lose its original flavor by being diluted with enough water to fill a large vessel.

Aristotle has already called the plot the soul of tragedy (6. 50a 38-39). Let us now use his metaphor as the means of bringing to light what he conceives

to be the proper relation between plot and tragedy. The plot of a tragedy is not only as the single soul to its single body, sustaining it as one and only one soul sustains a body, it is also as a soul capable of filling its body because it has the same dimensions. The body of epic poetry, however, is much too huge to be filled by a single soul, i.e., a single plot, so that if it is to be properly filled and sustained we must provide it with more than one soul, i.e., one plot. If this is not done, two other courses remain open: the large body can be filled with a small soul so rarefied as to have lost its natural density, or it can be truncated and reduced to the dimensions of a small soul. All three of these procedures are unjustifiable and unacceptable, and none of them is ever resorted to by tragedy. That being so, tragedy is far superior to epic poetry in its plots.

Now Aristotle here assumes that a tragic plot is one, that it is composed of a single action—an idea that he expounded with great clarity in an early chapter (III. 5c). On the other hand we have shown that the well-made tragedy or comedy must contain two actions, i.e., two plots, and not one, though one of the two will be subordinate to the other (p. 88). And we must not fail to observe that being restricted, as it is, both in time and in space, a tragedy cannot have a plot whose action extends beyond twelve hours (a prohibition sometimes disregarded by Euripides, Plautus, and others)¹ or is too crowded with incident (a prohibition disregarded by poets who have compressed the Theban war and other actions of like magnitude into a single tragedy). It is important to stress the latter point because endowing a small body with a large soul is no less an error than endowing a large one with a small soul, for it would entail either compressing and deforming the soul or enlarging the body beyond its natural dimensions. (Both these procedures are illustrated in the tragedies just mentioned.) Again, Aristotle would have it that the body of an epic poem is so huge that no single soul could possibly inform every part of it and therefore insists that an epic poem requires more than one plot. This is clean contrary to what is observed in nature, where each animal—be it whale, elephant, giant, dwarf, or fly—is endowed with a single soul. We must therefore reject Aristotle's conclusion and observe instead that souls (or plots) may, like bodies, be large or small or of a moderate magnitude. And because the plot of an epic poem may supply plots for more than one tragedy, it does not follow, for the reasons already given, that it is not one as each of the tragic plots formed from it is one; in point of fact, the *Iliad*, which according to Aristotle is informed by a single plot and can supply plots for more than one tragedy, is not even one whole plot, but, as we have seen, only a part of the excessively long action of the Trojan war (p. 227). Now I have no difficulty understanding why a tragedy or a comedy must be of a certain definite length: dramatic poetry is destined for performance on the stage before an audience, and as a result tragedies and comedies, as I have shown elsewhere, must be longer than an hour or two and not longer than twelve. The corollary to this I also understand, that the plot must be of a magnitude commensurate with the tragedy or the comedy. What I fail to understand is why an epic poem, which Aristotle maintains need not be heard from a platform in a city square but can be

perfectly apprehended by being simply read, must be of a definite magnitude, much less why it should be of a magnitude so great that it cannot be filled by a single plot.

Suitable plots for epic poems, then, may be small, large, very large, or of a moderate magnitude. The small must not be brought before the public in bodies that are correspondingly small, and if some epic poet should insist on handling a small plot he would first have to unmake it and then remake it large enough to fill a body of a moderate magnitude. If the plot is very large there is no need of his compressing it into a small one, for being divided into books the poem is cut into a number of segments of a length that permits their being recited singly over an equal number of days. Tragic plots, on the other hand, cannot be treated in this fashion, for they must be neither small nor very large but of a moderate magnitude, of a magnitude, that is, to inform a tragedy that can be performed in the space of one day. And I see no reason why these plots may not, without, as Aristotle assumes, inevitable offense to propriety, be made into epic poems—I mean such epic poems as are composed for recitation before an audience in a city square.

* * * * *

[2.363] Aristotle has asserted that the imitation proper to epic poetry is less strictly unified than any that is proper to tragedy. The evidence for that, he now says (26. 62b 4–5), is that “any one epic poem can supply the plots for several tragedies.” In other words, the unity of epic poetry cannot be said to be perfect and stable if an epic poem can supply plots for more than one tragedy, each of them consisting of a single plot that cannot be divided into two or more. To this should be added: And if a plot is one as a tragic plot is one it must be rejected as not of a proper magnitude for an epic poem of normal length or must be unmade so as to be remade into one of that magnitude.

Because an epic plot—I mean one of very great length—can furnish plots for several tragedies, Aristotle argues (26. 62b 3–5) that the epic is a composite of a number of plots. But Aristotle’s argument is not at all conclusive, for the part of the epic from which the tragic plot is drawn is not a unified plot within a plot but a part of the whole, which is assuredly one. The wrath of Achilles, for instance, which forms an epic plot, is nevertheless a part of the total Trojan war, which could be a single all-inclusive epic plot, and that wrath is not one plot within a larger one, but a part of the whole, the part which, as Aristotle attests, supplied Homer with the plot of his *Iliad*. If when an arm or a thigh of the wax statue of a giant has been fashioned into the statue of a man of ordinary stature, we regard the smaller statue as one without thereby concluding that unity could never have been predicated of the larger, why should not an epic plot be considered as one in the same sense as a tragic plot even though the latter consists of a part of the former? Some one may object that the tragic plot is more truly one because, unlike the epic plot, it cannot be broken up into two or more lesser ones. To this we reply that each of its parts or episodes might well be made into a single unified plot, but the resulting

poem could not be performed on a stage or be recited in a city square, not because it would be lacking in unity but because it would not be of the necessary length.

* * * * *

[2.364] Aristotle now says (26. 62b 5-7) that if poets choose a plot appropriate to the length of the epic metre, that plot will be the composite of several plots. If, on the other hand, they choose to make their poem out of a single plot they must do one of two things, adopt a line shorter than the epic line so that the line may conform to the shortness of the plot, which, manifesting itself through the shorter lines, will seem extraordinarily brief, a mere "mouse's tail,"² or give the poem length, a length appropriate to a poem in the epic metre, and expand to fill it from beginning to end, with the result that it will lose its natural good flavor, as a small quantity of wine to which enough water has been added to fill a large vessel loses its original strength....³ This simile does little to bring out Aristotle's meaning, for if we lack enough wine of the same kind as that in the vessel we fill the vessel with wine of a different kind, and the mingling of the two wines is comparable to combining two different plots, both, let us say, tragic, to form a plot of the appropriate epic magnitude; or we add to it the requisite quantity of water, which is comparable to combining two plots, say one tragic and one comic, again to form a plot of epic magnitude, though there have been a few poets who have composed tragicomedies, which is to say that they have mixed water and wine, though being dramatists they have not labored under the constraint to which all epic poets are subject of producing a poem of the proper epic length. A more appropriate metaphor would have been that of a small quantity of a concentrated substance of a certain nature and certain potencies which upon dissolving would change its nature and expand without the addition of a second substance, as a quantity of earth when it dissolves turns into a great quantity of water, a quantity of water into a great volume of air, and a volume of air into a great volume of fire. These substances are alike in that when they dissolve each changes its nature and loses its natural strength. These phenomena are described by Plato in his *Timaeus* (56-57).

* * * * *

[2.365] If poets seek to make one poem out of several tragic plots, none of which would by itself be of a sufficient length to be appropriately treated in the epic metre, the result will be a poem not with one but with several plots, and having produced a poem of that sort they can be said to have lapsed into artistic error for the reasons already given. But if epic poets cannot make their poems out of single plots not perfect in form and magnitude nor yet out of several plots, we are bound to conclude that in this one respect they rank below the tragic plots. On the other hand it has been shown (p. 227) that Homer fashioned his *Iliad* out of a single plot, or, rather, a part of a single action,

and did not distort it by stretching it beyond its natural length, and that he also made use of not more than one plot in fashioning the *Odyssey*. But since it is also a fact that parts of each of these poems can be turned into the plots of several tragedies, we are bound to conclude that neither poem can be truly said to have been fashioned out of a single plot. The answer to this is (26. 62b 7-11) that though neither the *Iliad* nor the *Odyssey* can be justly said to have a perfectly unified plot, yet each is nevertheless as unified as it is possible for it to be, and the several plots in each are so joined together as to appear to be one. Thus the colossal marble columns in the portico of the Pantheon in Rome, the temple erected by Marcus Agrippa, consist each of a number of marble drums; yet these are so cunningly joined that no one but would take each column to have been carved out of a single monolith. This matter has been adequately discussed, and I need say no more about it here.

3d

It Effects a More Vigorous Purgation of the Passions

[2.366] Having first offered the reasons why epic poetry would seem to deserve a higher rank than tragedy, then the refutation of these reasons, and finally the reasons why tragedy would seem to deserve a higher rank than epic poetry—having, as it were, conducted a kind of trial—Aristotle now (26. 62b 12-15) assumes the role of judge and pronounces a verdict in favor of tragedy, ranking it above epic poetry for the reasons already given and for still another now advanced for the first time: that tragedy is more effective than the epic in producing the pleasure that is more than any other peculiar to the art of poetry. It is an established fact that pleasure is the end of poetry and that by pleasure is meant not any and every pleasure but the pleasure that poetry alone can offer. But if tragedy is better adapted than the epic to attain that end, it follows that as the poetic species best adapted to produce poetic pleasure tragedy is to be ranked higher than any other species of poetry including epic poetry. Aristotle says this much but does not pause to say precisely what the generic effect of poetry is within which this peculiarly poetic pleasure is to be subsumed. To know it we must recall what has been said before (p. 165), that the end of poetry is pleasure and that this pleasure is of two kinds, the direct and the indirect. Indirect pleasure is peculiar to tragedy. It is felt when tragedy represents a good person falling from happiness to misery, and it seems to be engendered by pity and fear in the manner that has been explained. Direct pleasure is of two kinds, the first of which results from a happy ending for the good and an unhappy for the bad, the second from a happy ending for both the good and the bad. The first is proper to epic poetry and the second to comedy. Neither kind can be engendered by pity or fear.

Now both principal kinds of pleasure, the direct and the indirect, are proper to poetry in general; neither is more or less a generic pleasure than the other, though if we pause to consider their species we shall find that any one

of the three is more closely related to one species of poetry than to another. It would seem, then, that it is less than accurate for Aristotle to observe that the pleasure engendered by epic poetry and proper to it is not a pleasure proper to the art of poetry and is less its end than the pleasure engendered by tragedy. What he should have said is that since tragedy has indirect pleasure for its end it can attain that end only by first arousing the emotions of pity and fear, by doing which it enhances its utility, for it thereby purges the soul of those emotions in the manner he has already described, going so far on that occasion as to contradict Plato his master, so great was to him the importance of this doctrine of purgation...

3e

It is the More Difficult to Produce

[2.367] Perhaps the answer we are seeking could be more surely found by proceeding in a different direction from Aristotle's. Tragedy is to be ranked above epic poetry for two reasons above all others: because it gives the more pleasure and because the making of tragedies requires the more genius. A tragedy staged with an appropriate spectacle gives much greater pleasure, proportionately to its magnitude, to both the ignorant and the cultivated, than epic poetry, and the making of it requires a poet of greater genius than the making of an epic. For it is a labor of great difficulty to create a variety of persons each of whom must speak consistently in the manner appropriate to his station and deliver himself of such utterances as will win and hold the attention of the audience. (This is the reason why, as we have seen [p. 248] Aristotle rates it as one of Homer's greatest glories that he says little in his own person and leaves the speaking to his characters, never failing to suit the utterance to the person.) And it is no less difficult to construct a plot which represents an action involving only a few persons and every part of which takes place, with no violation of verisimilitude, not only in as brief a period of time as twelve hours but in a place as restricted as a house or a city. Epic poetry, on the other hand, being subject to no restrictions of time and place and enjoying the freedom to invent more, longer, and more varied episodes than tragedy, may offer the more abundant but not the proportionately more intense pleasure; and besides sharing with tragedy the privilege of representing the actions not only of men but also of gods who have descended from heaven to earth, it enjoys the advantage of representing at pleasure those of gods in their celestial dwellings. And indeed it may represent not only the visible actions of men and gods but the invisible as well, such as the secret thoughts which they revolve in their breasts and the words they speak and the things they do when unobserved. Yet however great these advantages may be and however apt to give great pleasure, the fact remains that the peculiar constituents of epic poetry may be invented with less exertion of the poet's genius than those of tragedy, and we may fairly conclude that of the two species of poetry tragedy merits the higher rank.¹

NOTES AND INDICES

Abbreviations

- A. Aristotle
- Bywater *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry*, with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by Ingram Bywater. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909).
- C. Castelvetro
- Robortello Francisci Robortelli *In Librum Aristotelis De Arte Poetica Explicationes* (Florence, 1548). The translation of the *Poetics* in this edition is Alessandro Pazzi's.
- R. Lodovico Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele Vulgarizzata e Sposta*, a cura di Werther Romani, 2 vols. (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1979).
- Vettori Petri Victorii *Commentarii in Primum Librum Aristotelis De Arte Poetarum* (Florence, 1573). The first edition was published in Florence in 1560.

Notes to the Introduction

1. Pier Vettori wrote under the name Petrus Victorius. C. seems to have been unacquainted with his Italian name and regularly gives him the name of Pietro Vittorio.
2. *Treatise on the art of Poetry* translates Πραγματεία τέχνης ποιητικῆς. C. takes Πραγματεία in the sense of "undertaking" (It. *impresa*) and translates the title *Impresa dell'Arte Poetica*.
3. On the other hand he never repudiates A.'s authority as a whole as does Giambattista Giralaldi Cintio in his *De' Romanzi* (Milan: Biblioteca Rara, 1864), pp. 50-51: "For to speak the truth our language too has its own poetic forms, which are so much its own that they are not those of the languages of other nations, especially Greeks or Latins. Therefore the Tuscan poet must not be pent within the same confines to which Greek and Latin poets are restricted . . . The Tuscan poet should travel the roads which are proposed to him by the best poets of our tongue with the same authority which the Greek and Latin poets enjoyed in their own. And this has been the reason why I have often laughed at some who have sought to bring the writers of romances completely under the laws of the art of poetry given to us by Aristotle and Horace, never stopping to consider that neither the one nor the other knew our language or was acquainted with the art of composing romances." C. never removes Ariosto from under the authority of A.
4. Minturno, *De Poeta* (Venice, 1559), p. 9: "... qui tanquam Deus, et arbiter naturae, doctorque rerum et divinarum et humanarum, et morum magister. . . ." Scaliger, *Poetice* 1.1: "[Poeta] . . . videtur . . . velut alter deus condere: unde cum eo commune nomen ipsi non a consensu hominum, sed a naturae providentia inditum videatur."
5. C. even denies the efficacy of the poet's own emotions as inspirers of love poetry. On p. 38 he paraphrases (somewhat inaccurately) Dante's words to Bonagiunta (*Purg.* 24. 52-54) that he wrote only what love dictated to him. C.'s comment on that declaration (p. 39) is simply that he does not believe it, "for," he explains, "I know that many men endowed with minds that could never be described as dull have composed poems under the stimulus of love that are not only less than perfect but of no account whatever."
6. It is significant that C. never uses the word art as it is defined by A. in the *Nic. Ethics* 6.4: "A habit of production in conscious accordance with a correct method" (trans. by Lane Cooper in *Methods and Aims in the Study of Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940, p. 2). Only once, on p. 42, where he denies that poetry could have had spontaneous beginnings, does he make use of the word

habit in what may be its Aristotelian sense: "for nothing can be produced spontaneously but by those who have had long practice of the necessary art and have formed the habit of it (*e dopo l'abito stabilito*)." His commentary on the *Poetics* is an art of poetry in the sense of being a manual for poets.

7. R. 1.512.

8. Renato Barilli *Poetica e Retorica* (Milan: Mursia, 1969), pp. 82–84, attributes C.'s doctrine to his Protestant sense of vocation. The poet, like the rest of his fellow men, is obliged by the divine law to define his mission in life with all possible rigor and never to stray beyond its limits. "Woe to the poetry," Barilli says, "that fails to give pleasure with the excuse that it seeks also to be useful and instructive, and woe to the morality that weakens its mission by seeking the assistance of pleasure." Barilli does not suggest that this justification of C.'s doctrine is to be found in the commentary. The one supporting statement by C. he quotes from a note on the first book of Plato's *Republic* in the posthumous *Opere Varie Critiche* (Berne, 1727), p.205; "Men are created by God to improve (*giovare*) and delight (*dilettare*) their fellow men, each through some art or science or occupation, which he can do if he knows the area of his greatest competency, though he may also have some accessory skill." But *giovare* and *dilettare* inevitably call to mind Horace's *prodesse* and *delectare* (*Ars Poet.* 333), which would suggest that a master of the art of poetry had been created like the rest of humankind to bring utility no less than delight to his fellows. No doctrine like C.'s is proclaimed by the Protestant Sidney, who defines poetry as "an art of imitation . . . with this end, to teach and delight" or by the Protestant Milton, who in his youth contemplated a poem that should be "doctrinal to a nation," and made the justification of the ways of God to men the end of his *Paradise Lost*.

9. This is no doubt the most distinctive of all of C.'s doctrines, and no more acceptable to most of his contemporaries than the doctrine of pleasure as the sole end of poetry. The Italian humanist typically looked upon poetry as strictly a commodity for learned humanists. Gian Battista Pigna in his *I Romanzi* (Venice, 1554), p. 31 can speak of the poet's "secrets," which only suitably educated minds could penetrate: "I . . . believe that not everyone should be forbidden to read the poets but only those who are incapable of apprehending their meanings or understanding their secrets. Such are the ignorant plebeians who should be forbidden to read the poets for the same reason that women and the very young were forbidden to read Solomon's *Song of Songs*, for if they had not been they would have taken it to be unedifying . . . Poetry contains four lies that are seen to be reasonable only by people of sound judgment; to the rest they are a scandal. They are these: making the gods act like human beings, making men assume a variety of forms, giving speech to beasts, magnifying certain things beyond reason. Such things are held to be incredible by gross minds; they are accepted as beautiful and good by the judicious." Sperone Speroni considers poetry less esoteric than Pigna. In his "Discorso in Lode della Terra" in *Opere* (Venice, 1740) 2.472 he says: "It may seem to some that it would be impossible to draw from the fictions of the poets an argument capable of proving a truth. Whoever believes this, however, is ignorant of the powers of poetry, which more often than not conceals under the veil of its fictions the mysteries of the virtues and of the sciences, that is, of true philosophy; and it does not so conceal them that they cannot be discerned by those who have eyes to see. Surely the poets (I speak of the good and pious poets) invoke the help of God at the beginning of their poems and sometimes also later." We have an excellent example of the "veil" in the *Aeneid* (the tempest in the first book) being rent by a poet and scholar in a letter of Petrarch's quoted by J. H. Robinson in *Petrarch* (New York: Put-

- nam, 1907), pp. 234–35: "Virgil's subject, as I understand the matter, is The Perfect Man In the passage that you ask me to explain I look upon the winds as nothing more nor less than blasts of anger and mad desire, which disturb with their wild storms the quiet of our life, as tempests do some tranquil sea. Aeolus is our reason, which curbs and controls these headstrong passions. If it did not do so they would sweep the sea and land and the overarching sky, that is, our blood and flesh and bones and our very souls, and plunge them down to death and destruction" We are here at the antipodes from Castelvetro, for whom the *Aeneid* contained no more mysteries than a tale by Boccaccio.
10. Bernardino Daniello, *Della Poetica in Trattati di Poetica e Retorica del Cinquecento*, a cura di B. Weinberg (Bari: Laterza, 1970), p. 243.
 11. Benedetto Varchi, *Lezioni di M. Benedetto Varchi*, (Florence, 1590), p. 574.
 12. Cicero, *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* 1.3: "Optimus est enim orator qui dicendo animos audientium et docet et delectat et permovet."
 13. Varchi, op. cit., n. 11, p. 573.
 14. Minturno, op. cit., n. 4, p. 102.
 15. Daniello, op. cit., n. 10, p. 249.
 16. C. returns to this subject in his comments on the third book of Plato's *Republic* (*Opere Varie Critiche*, pp. 216–17 and 226–27). In the first he refers to Plato's assumption (*Rep.* 3.395) that "poetry is produced for no other purpose than that of teaching by examples and that whatever is offered by poetry, be it good or bad, its public can and ought to imitate." This assumption C. condemns as false, for before we accept it as a teacher in Plato's sense, as a producer of examples for men to follow, "poetry is presented to us as matter to think about and to give us examples of every kind, such examples as will strike fear in the hearts of the wicked, or console the good, or acquaint us with the nature of men and women. And so to refute what Plato says in the passage in question A. says that "tragedy with its representations of fearsome and unjust things expels fears and injustices from the hearts of the audience." The second comment is occasioned by Plato's opinion (*Rep.* 3.413) that potential guardians must in their youth be subjected to severe tests of their mettle and be proved even more rigorously than gold in the fire. C. comments that it was perhaps with this idea in mind that A. said that tragedy "purged the soul of passions with the same passions, since the latter passions constituted a refining and a proving of man." These interpretations of A. on the effect of tragedy on its audience represent A. defending tragedy against Plato's charges of its evil moral influence. The opinions which C. attributes to A. should not be taken to be his own.
 17. R. 1.85.
 18. Dante, *Epist.* 10.15. In his *I Romanzi* (Venice, 1554), pp. 2–3, Pigna says that poetry can be said to have utility only in the sense that when we go to it weary of mind and body it restores our powers and makes us once more fit for contemplation and action.
 19. The expression is forced on C. by the argument. Normally he would have said, "to imitate human actions as they truly are."
 20. For more parallels between poetry and history see "history" in index.
 21. The subject of verisimilitude is extensively treated in Part V.4 and Part VI.
 22. Romani (2.378) comments pointedly, "Paradoxically, one is often given the impression that for C. the poet rather than applying his genius to the making of his poem makes the poem to parade his genius."
 23. Scaliger, who in *Poetice* I.1 said that the poet teaches and does not simply please, asserts in 7.3 that "the poet portrays the moral dispositions of men through their actions so that we may embrace the good and imitate them in the conduct of

- our lives (*ad agendum*) and spurn the bad so that we may refrain from indulging in them (*ob abstinendum*)."
24. In I.2, C. stresses the centrality of plot in the poem. Plot is "the peculiar concern of the art of poetry." It is the only part of the poem that the poet may learn from the masters of the art of poetry. Character, thought, and language are the concerns of other masters (moral philosophers, rhetoricians, grammarians, et al.) and must be learned from them.
 25. Varchi, (op. cit., n. 11, p. 582) expresses the universally held theory of the sixteenth century: "Tragic poets . . . imitate the illustrious actions of kings and other great personages. Comic poets, on the other hand, imitate the private actions of the lowly." See also I.12.1.
 26. For more on the perfections of the Homeric epics see *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in index.
 27. For C's proof of this contention see the story of Michelangelo's reconstruction of the river god's missing beard, p. 103.
 28. No mention is made of the possibility that, though a good man, the tragic hero might have fallen from high place as the result of some moral lapse. A.'s *hamartia* is understood to denote no more than "error of judgment." The same interpretation is given to the term by Robortello (p. 132), who says that the tragic agent sins unwittingly and unintentionally (*qui ignoracione peccat et imprudentia*) and by Vettori (p. 123), who attributes his fall to some intellectual error and bad judgment (*errore quopiam animi maloque consilio*).
 29. "Abominable" translates C.'s *abominevole*, which in turn translates A.'s *μαρόν*. To C. "abominable" means "of a kind to inspire serious doubts about the divine goodness and justice."
 30. "Under one revolution of the sun" translates C.'s *sotto un giro del sole* (R. 1.146). *Sotto* is C.'s literal translation of A.'s *ὑπο* (under or less than). A., then, says that the actions represented in Greek tragedies generally occurred in less than twenty-four hours. C., who unlike A. believed that the performance of a tragedy on the stage filled as much time as would have been filled by the action if it had really occurred, felt obliged to limit the length of both the tragic action and the tragic performance to a maximum of exactly twelve hours for reasons that had nothing to do with dramatic theory. See p. 243.
 31. Histories such as these by Plutarch, Sallust, Livy, and Trogus Pompeius were condemned above as no proper models for epic poetry, which must restrict itself to a single action of a single person.
 32. Jean de la Taille, *De l'Art de la Tragédie*, édité par Frederick West (Manchester, 1939), p. 25: "Il faut toujours représenter l'histoire ou le jeu en un mesme jour, en un mesme temps, et en un mesme lieu."
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 27: "Qu'il n'y ait rien d'oisif, d'inutile, ny rien qui soit mal à propos."
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 17: "C'est là une hypothèse qu'on ne saurait exclure, car nous savons que Jean de la Taille rejette la doctrine utilitaire d'Horace que le théoricien italien fut le premier à critiquer."
 35. Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 69.
 36. *New York Times Book Review*, January 31, 1982.
 37. R. Barilli, n. 8, p. 95.
 38. *Mutatis mutandis* C.'s ideal play corresponds perfectly with Leonardo's ideal painting: "That painting is the most to be praised which agrees most exactly with the thing imitated." Quoted by Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 30.
 39. Weinberg, op. cit., n. 35, pp. 503-505.

40. R. Bray, *La Formation de la Doctrine Classique en France* (Paris: Hachette, 1927), Chap. III, esp. p. 47.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 256: "Castelvetro est de tous les commentateurs celui qui a le plus fait pour la règle des unités."
 42. See V.4c.3.

Notes to Part I

- I.1.1. "Verisimilitude" translates *verisimilitudine*, which will also be translated "probability." *Verisimile* and *verisimilmente* will be regularly translated "probable" and "probably."
 I.1.2. Lucian is the author of an essay on the writing of history ("Quomodo Historia Sit Conscribenda"); observations on the writing of history are to be found in Rodolphus Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica* 3.7 and in the fifth book of George of Trebizond's *Rhetorica* (Paris, 1532), pp. 623-35.
 I.2.1. "Simple" translates *simplici* and "double" *doppie*. A double plot is one with a double ending, happy for the good and unhappy for the bad; a simple plot has a single ending, the same for both the good and the bad. In other contexts *simplice* designates a plot without a reversal of fortune and distinguishes such plots from the "complex" (*raviluppate*).
 I.3.1. "Imitation" translates *rassomiglianza* and will also translate *rappresentazione*; the verb "imitate" will regularly translate either *rassomigliare* or *rappresentare*. In certain contexts *rappresentare* and *rappresentazione* will be translated "to represent" and "representation." In the concluding sentence of this paragraph "medium" translates *stormento*, "objects" *materia* (hereafter translated also as "matter" or "subject matter"), and "mode" *modo*.
 I.3.2. In I. 47a 22 A. names *ῥημός*, *λόγος*, and *ἁρμονία* as three media available for the production of epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, and the dithyramb. C.'s translation (R. 1.27) for the first of these terms is *numero* (rhythm), for the second *parlare* (speech), and for the third *harmonia* (music). In the commentary *numero* becomes *ballo* (dance) and *parlare* becomes *parole* (language). *Harmonia* remains *harmonia*, only occasionally appearing as *suono* (music). I have rendered both *suono* and *harmonia* by "music." See III.1.1.
 I.3.3. "A species of poetry" translates *maniera di poesia*. C. holds (and in this he believes that he is — as he is not — at one with A.) that when A. names language as a medium of poetry the term is to be understood as *metrical* language. That being so, when he names rhythm as a medium of poetry the term cannot logically be taken as an accompaniment of language, for the language of poetry is intrinsically rhythmical, i.e., metrical (see I.5); it must be taken as the sole medium of a poetry whose medium is not language. That poetry, C. believes, is the dance. This explains why in the commentary *ῥημός* is translated *ballo* (see I.3.2) and why the dance is here called a species of poetry.
 I.4.1. No such indication is intended by A.
 I.5.1. In this chapter C. undertakes to prove (following A., as he believes) that prose has not been commonly used in the composition of epics and that prose is therefore not to be approved as a fit medium for the epic. His argument rests

on his reading of I. 47a 28–47b 24, the opening clause of which (ἡ δὲ ἐποποιία μόνον τοῖς λόγοις φιλοῖς ἢ τοῖς μέτροις...) he translates (R. 1.30), "Ma l'epopeia [rassomiglia] solamente con parlari nudi, o con misurati versi..." [But the epic [imitates] only with bare language, that is, with metrical language...]. ("H, which is correctly rendered by o [or] in the translation, is rendered by "that is" in the commentary.) Modern editors have placed *ἐποποιία* in brackets and have ignored it in their translations; they also take *λόγοις φιλοῖς* to mean "with language unaccompanied by music" and understand that the language may be prose or verse. For them the subject of the statement is not the epic but an imitative art (like the mimes of Sophron and of Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues) which has no name.

I.5.2. The second of the two questions mentioned early in the paragraph, which is whether metre makes the poem or determines its species, will be considered in I.8.

I.5.3. Vettori (p. 14) holds that the mimes of Sophron were in verse (Quis dubitare potest, quin illi nullo modo soluta oratione forent). His misjudgment results from his misreading of Aristotle's words quoted by Athenaeus, which he takes to declare that Sophron's mimes were metrical compositions (Cum igitur vocet ipso illos mimos ἐμμέτρους...). Robortello (p. 14) holds that they, and also the mimes of Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues, are a kind of epic poetry. Robortello interprets Aristotle (I. 47b 9–11) to say that if the Socratic dialogues and the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus, all of which are in prose, were not species of poetic imitation, dialogues and mimes could not be recognized as having anything in common with the epic, for not being in verse they would lack any feature that would relate them to it; as it is, they and the epic have imitation in common (...hoc quidem cum epopoeia habent commune, quod imitantur...) though they differ from it in that the epic is in verse and they are in prose (hoc differunt, quod hi soluta oratione, illa metro scripta est).

I.5.4. C. B. Gulick translates (L. C. L.): "Therefore we shall not deny that even the so-called *Mimes* of Sophron, which are not in verse, are conversations, or that the dialogues of Alexamenus of Teos, which are the first Socratic conversations to be written, are imitations."

I.6.1. Martial's epigrams have no prose preface.

I.7.1. "Earthly events, etc." translates "gli avvenimenti fortunosi del mondo." *Fortunosi* throughout the commentary describes human events as distinguished from events that are the effects of natural causes. In his "Correzione d'alcune Cose nel Dialogo delle Lingue di Benedetto Varchi," in *L'Ercolano, Dialogo di Benedetto Varchi* (Florence, 1846), p. 599, C. says that there are two ministers of the Divine Will: one of them, known to all men, is Nature; the other, whose operations are hidden from human view, is Fortune, "through whom many things are done that are not done by nature." In his commentary on Virgil's discourse on Fortune in *Inf.* 7. 70–96 C. says (*Sposizione...a XXIX Canti dell'Inferno Dantesco* [Modena, 1886], pp. 99–100) that though God undeniably effects the distribution and circulation of worldly goods through His angels, those functions are not the office of the single angel whom men call Fortune. Virgil's doctrine, he holds, has no basis either in reason or in Scripture. In the commentary fortune is hardly more than a figure of speech; human action for C. is the result of free human choice under Providence; human history is assumed to be determined (I.9) by "the course of human events or by the manifest or hidden will of God." See also III.8 and note 2 and III.14 and note 1.

I.8.1. "Heroic metre" translates *versi heroici*; but C.'s full statement is *parole poetiche, cio è...versi heroici*. In this chapter he continues to use *parole poetiche* and *parole non poetiche* to designate metrical and unmetrical language.

- I.8.2. This sentence, much abbreviated in the translation, does not appear in the edition of 1570.
- I.9.1. Heinsius' emendation of μουσικόν (music) to φυσικόν (natural philosophy) has been accepted by modern editors.
- I.9.2. Nicander (born c. 150 B.C.), author of *Theriaca*, a poem on snakes and other venomous animals and the remedies for their bites and of *Alexipharmaca*, a poem cataloguing various poisons and their antidotes; Serenus (d. A.D. 212), author of *De Medicina Praecepta*, a short poem containing a number of domestic prescriptions; Girolamo Fracastoro (1478-1553), author of *Syphilis sive De Morbo Gallico*, a poem on the origins, the symptoms, and the cure of syphilis and of *Joseph*, an unfinished biographical poem on Joseph, son of Jacob; Aratus (c. 315-240/39 B.C.), author of *Phaenomena*, an astronomical poem, the latter part of which treats of weather signs; Manilius (a contemporary of Augustus and Tiberius), author of the astronomical poem *Astronomica*; Giovanni Pontano (1426-1503), author of *Urania*, a poem expounding the astronomy of the 15th century; Silius Italicus (A.D. 26-101), author of *Punica*, a 17-book poem on the Second Punic War.
- I.9.3. The many writings of which C. speaks can be summarized in a single sentence spoken by Fracastoro in the person of Naugerius in his dialogue of that name, p. 158 a: "The poet as poet is moved by no other aim than that of writing eloquently (bene dicendi) on any subject of his choice" (circa unumquodque propositum sibi). See the facsimile edition of *Naugerius* with an English translation by Ruth Kelso (University of Illinois Press, 1924). See also statement by J. C. Scaliger, III.5d.12.
- I.9.4. "Genius" translates *ingegno*. On this page *ingegno* names the faculty by which the poet invents plots, thought, metaphors and other figures of speech, etc. *ingegno* may be said to be here synonymous with imagination. In I.12 the first faculty said to be common to all men is *ingegno*. In that passage the word is translated "intellect," and there it signifies not only man's cognitive faculty but the sum of man's intellectual endowments, including the imagination. In the *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* the first definition of *ingegno* and the second of *intelletto* are identical: "L'insieme delle qualità intellettuali e delle facoltà naturali della mente" (The sum of the intellectual qualities and the natural faculties of the mind). In these pages *ingegno* is generally translated "genius," less frequently, when the context requires it, "intellect." It must be kept in mind that C.'s poet is not only a man of imagination but also an "intellectual," a student of the art of poetry, of human character (II.8; 1.107), of language, etc. C. repeatedly exalts Homer for his more than human *ingegno*, but in the sentence in which he speaks of him as a pupil of Phemius (p. 90) the praise is for "the acuteness of his discerning intellect" (l'acume del suo sottile intelletto). See III.5c.3. A. says of poetry that it is a more philosophical thing than history. C. understands him to mean that poetry is more than history "a thing for the philosopher and one duly exercised in intellectual pursuits." See III.5d.5-8 and VII.2b.2.
- I.9.5. "Acuteness of genius" translates *agutezza d'ingegno*. C. speaks of the acuteness of the inventor's genius, where other critics would normally speak of its fertility.
- I.9.6. "Metrically ordered language" translates *parole poetiche*. See I.8 and note 1.
- I.9.7. "By their intellectual efforts" translates *speculando*; but *speculando* near the end of this sentence is also used to name the activity of the poet imitating a human action: "...ufficio...di buono poeta, che è di speculando rassomigliare la verità degli accidenti fortunosi degli huomini...." The poet is here said to im-

- itate not an action but the *truth* of an action; the forced expression serves the purpose of highlighting the contrast between the work of the poet and that of the philosopher, who is said to discover the *truth* of a science or an art.
- I.10.1. Tradition assigns no poetical compositions to Lycurgus, though he is said to have received oracles in verse from Apollo at Delphi. Four of these are quoted by Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 7. 12. The last of them is quoted in a different version by Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 6) and erroneously ascribed to Tyrtaeus.
- I.10.2. The *Golden Verses* is a didactic poem of 71 lines, held in great honor by the Pythagoreans as a genuine work of their master, but actually a forgery of late date. The text is printed at the head of F. G. A. Mallachius' edition of *Heraculis in Aureum Pythagoreorum Carmen Commentarium* (Berlin, 1853). Phocylides of Miletus, Greek poet, born ca. 560 B.C. All that remains of his didactic poems, which enjoyed great popularity in antiquity, is printed in Theod. Bergk's *Poetae Lyrici Graeci* (Berlin: Teubner, 1915) 2. 68–73. Brunetto Latini's *Tesoretto* is a story in verse of an imaginary voyage in which the author encounters allegorical personages who instruct him in science and ethics. See Bianca Ceva, *Brunetto Latini* (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1965), pp. 82–97. The text has been edited by G. F. Contini in *Poeti del Duecento* (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1960).
- I.11.1. "Objects" translates *soggetto*.
- I.12.1. The idea that tragedy and comedy are distinguishable by the social rank of their characters was universally accepted in C.'s time. It is already found in Plautus, who, in the Prologue to his *Amphitryon*, has Mercury say that he will call the play about to go on the boards a *tragicomoedia* because its *dramatis personae* include gods (Jupiter and Mercury) and men and women of high and low degree (Amphitryon, the commander-in-chief of the Theban army, and his wife Alcmena; Bromia, maidservant to Alcmena; Sosia, a slave of Amphitryon; and Plepharo, a pilot.) Diomedes, *Ars Grammatica* (*Grammatici Latini*, ed. Keil 1. 487–8) says: "Comoedia a tragoedia differt, quod in tragoedia introducuntur heroes, duces, reges, in comoedia humiles atque privatae personae...." Diomedes attributes the idea to Theophrastus. A. P. McMahon, "Seven Questions on Aristotelian Definitions of Tragedy and Comedy," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 40 (1929), 97–198, argues that the first statement of the idea occurs in Aristotle's *On Poets*.
- I.12.2. "Intellect" translates *ingegno*; "will" *elettione*; "fortune" *fortuna*; "rank" *condizione*; "activity" *attione*.
- I.13.1. A certain kind of marble, etc., an inaccurate recollection of Aristotle's *On Marvelous Things Heard* 134, where A. speaks of a salt found in the vicinity of Utica which is white and gummy when mined but turns hard as Parian marble when exposed to the sun. — A hare, etc. Aristotle, *Hist. of Animals* 6. 33; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 8. 81. — An infant, etc. Aristotle, *Hist. of Animals* 7. 4. In saying seventh rather than eighth C. reproduces an error in Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* 7. 5), who otherwise follows Aristotle.
- I.13.2. An elaborated and distorted version of a few words in Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* 8. 64): "Alium equitem detracto oculorum operimento et cognito cum matre coitu petisse praerupta atque exanimatum."
- I.14.1. See III.14 and nn. 15 and 17.
- I.15.1. C.'s text reads *ἑτέρον τι*, which he translates (R.1.65) *un'altra cosa* (something else). Modern texts read *ἑτέρον τι*, and though modern editors take the phrase in the sense of "something else," they understand it to refer to a person: "some one else."
- I.15.2. "Dancing" translates *numero* and "music" *harmonia*. See l. 3 and n. 2.
- I.15.3. Vettori (p. 25) actually says that no epics of that kind are known to exist:

"Neque...ullum epicum eius generis reperitur."

- I.16.1. See I.15.1.
- I.16.2. The 67th of Catullus's poems is a dialogue between him and a house door.
- I.17.1. "Similitudinary" translates *similitudinario*. The English word is obsolete (its latest entry in the *OED* is dated 1680), but it has the merit of translating C.'s word exactly. The difference between the dramatic and the similitudinary modes is described in detail in the penultimate paragraph of this chapter.
- I.17.2. C.'s text says that the generalized narrative concerns itself with *capi, spetie, tutte le cose* and the particularized with *membra, cose particolari, parti*. I have omitted the first member of each series because however translated they seem simply to repeat the third members of the two series, "wholes" and "parts."
- I.17.3. See p. 82.

Notes to Part II

- II.1.1. "Imitation and music" translates *rassomiglianza et...musica*. C. ignores a third element named by A., which is rhythm. The clause from which C. takes his phrase reads κατὰ φύσιν δὲ ὄντας ἡμῖν τοῦ μιμεῖσθαι καὶ τῆς ἁρμονίας καὶ τοῦ ῥυθμοῦ, which C. correctly renders (R.1.89) "Perche adunque in noi secondo la natura è il rassomigliare et l' harmonia e 'l numero...." (Since, then, imitation and music and rhythm are natural to us....) In this chapter C. takes *numero* as synonymous with *harmonia* and *musica*. In I.3 his conception of the language of poetry as intrinsically metrical compelled him to translate *numero* as dancing. See I.3.2 and 3.
- II.1.2. C.'s rendering of 4. 48b 22-24 (R.1.89-90) reads "Da prima coloro che erano per natura vie piu [degli altri] disposti a quelli a poco a poco avanzarono et generarono la poesia versificando sprovedutamente" (At first those who had by nature a stronger bent [than others] for them [imitation, harmony, rhythm] advanced little by little and created poetry by versifying spontaneously).
- II.1.3. "Metre partakes of music and harmony" translates "Il verso ha della musica et dell' harmonia." This clause paraphrases A.'s τὰ...μέτρα...μόρια τῶν ῥυθμῶν (4. 48b 21), which C. correctly translates (R.1.89), "...i versi misurati sono particelle de' numeri...." (metres are species of rhythms). *Musica et...harmonia* are synonymous with *numeri*.
- II.2.1. The list derives from the *Phaedrus* (244), but Plato correctly refers to "the prophetess" at Delphi and "the priestesses" at Dodona.
- II.2.2. C. calls what follows "an addition" to A.'s discussion of character. I have chosen to make it part of this chapter because C. rejects A.'s doctrine and makes of it one more occasion for affirming that the poet cannot compose well except in a perfectly rational state.
- II.2.3. In his "Epistle to Posterity" (*Letters of Petrarch*, trans. Morris Bishop [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966], pp. 5ff.) Petrarch confesses that in his youth he had been "racked by an overwhelming love affair." In his *Secret* (trans. W. H. Draper [Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1967], pp. 144ff.), St. Augustine upbraids him for wasting his spirit upon an earthly attachment.
- II.2.4. A reminiscence of a sentence in L. B. Alberti's *De Pictura*, ed. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), p. 82. The scene is not the River Jordan but the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:24ff.).
- II.2.5. "Of superior intellectual capacities" both here and in the sentence above translates "fornito di buono ingegno." The capacity for transforming oneself in-

to another person in a given emotional state is said to require exactly the same faculties as that of conducting studies "of what persons in a given emotional state say and do."

- II.2.6. A.'s text (16. 55a 32-33) reads, διὸ εὐφροῦς ἡ ποιητικὴ ἐστὶ ἢ μανικοῦ, which Bywater translates, "Hence it is that poetry demands a man with a special gift for it, or else one with a touch of madness in him." C. cannot countenance a conception of poetic creation that accepts madness as a cause of poetry and so, in line with what he has said about the credulity of the common people, he assumes that the text has been tampered with by some scribe who shared their views, and restores it, as he believes, to its original state by emending ἢ ("or else") to οὐ ("and not"). The emendation brings A. into line with his own thinking, for now the sentence can be translated (R.1.476), "Per la qual cosa la poetica è da persona fornita di buona natura et non da furiosa" (Therefore poetry is for a person endowed with an excellent and not a madman's nature). In the commentary the "persona fornita di buona natura" becomes (R.1.486) *persona ingegnosa*, a person endowed with *ingegno*, which denotes neither more nor less than "with intellect," though in this context the phrase must be understood as "with an excellent intellect" (εὐφροῦς). C. only reluctantly recognizes the man with "a special gift" (Bywater) for poetry; for him poetry can be the creation of ordinary intellects that have mastered all the systematized formulations of the art of poetry and faithfully abide by their dictates. See II.5 and notes. Only Homer was endowed with what he frequently calls a superhuman genius; and Homer himself may have profited by the teaching of the learned Phemius. See III.5c. and n. 3. The next clause, τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν εὐπλαστοὶ οἱ δὲ ἐκστατικοὶ εἰσιν, Bywater translates, "The former can easily assume the required mood, and the latter may be actually beside himself with emotion." But for ἐκστατικοὶ C.'s text (like Robortello's and Vettori's) reads ἐξεταστικοὶ (adept at investigating), and he translates the clause (R.1.476) "Percioche di questi alcuni sono trasmutabili, et alcuni investigativi" (Of these some are capable of assuming the characteristics of others and some of investigating the varieties of human character). Though Pazzi's text (in Robortello, p. 199) reads ἐξεταστικοί, he had, in his own edition of the *Poetics* (Venice, 1536), emended that adjective to ἐκστατικοί translating (the translation remains unchanged in Robortello) "Aliqui autem a mente abstrahuntur". Robortello (p. 199) believes that Pazzi's emendation is unacceptable (Paccius...non intellexisse videtur) and translates the clause, "Hi enim apti sunt ad fingendum, illi vero ad inquirendum." Maggi, in *Vincentii Maddii et Bartholomaei Lombardi In Aristotelis de Poetica Communes Explanationes* (Venice, 1550), p. 187, accepted both the emendation and the translation ("Scribendum est ἐκστατικοί, quod verbum Paccius non inepte interpretatus est, QUI A MENTE ABSTRAHUNTUR").
- II.2.7. "Imitation" translates *imitatione*, a word that appears nowhere else outside this sentence. "Resemblance" translates *rassomiglianza*, C.'s usual translation of μέμνηται. "The objects of imitation" (la materia di questa rassomiglianza) have received thorough treatment in the earlier pages of the book, especially in I.11-17. C. continues to touch on the subject throughout the rest of the work.
- II.4.1. "Must...hone, etc." translates "si dea a sottigliare, et col suo ingegno a trovare...."
- II.4.2. Antipater of Sidon, fl. 100 B.C., is said by Cicero (*De Or.* 3. 50) to have had the ability to extemporize verses in the hexameter and other metres. In the course of his plea that L. Archias be granted Roman citizenship, Cicero (*Pro Archia Poeta* 8. 18) attests to his astounding powers as an extemporizer of verse.
- II.5.1. "That light of doctrine" translates "quel lume d' insegnamento." This

translation of C.'s sentence reproduces the incongruous image of light first gathered together and arranged in some kind of order and then taught. In my discussion of the paragraph below (n. 4), I drop the metaphor as unnecessary to the conduct of C.'s argument.

II.5.2. "Of ordinary...discourse" translates "di mezzano ingegno, et capaci di ragione."

II.5.3. "Not wholly impenetrable to ideas" translates "non del tutto rozzo."

II.5.4. In this paragraph C. has refuted Horace and Quintilian by changing the meanings of their terms. In both Horace and Quintilian *natura* and *ars* are used in the senses they had in antiquity and continued to have down to C.'s time and beyond. In Horace *natura* designates the natural gift for poetry, in Quintilian the natural gift for oratory; in both *ars* designates the acquired ability to produce excellent poetry or oratory through a natural gift that has been disciplined to function perfectly. C.'s refutation of their conclusion rests on conceptions of *arte* and *natura* unknown to them. *Natura* in this paragraph designates first the giver of the "light of doctrine," which is to say of those ideas of poetry which are said to be distributed as a natural gift (per dono naturale) among different men in different times and places (in diversi huomini in diversi luoghi, et tempi). But, more importantly for C.'s purpose, *natura* also designates the innate ideas themselves which the poet has received from nature. Horace's innate gift for poetry, then, becomes in C. a cluster of innate ideas on poetry. These ideas, the natural endowment of many, are said to be gathered together and reduced to order by art (si raccoglie, et si componga insieme dall' arte), meaning by men engaged in composing an art of poetry, which to C. is a systematic collection of ideas designed to teach how to produce excellent poetry. A perfect art of poetry is one in which *all* the innate ideas of poetry with which individuals have been endowed have been brought together and arranged in proper order. C. now contends that a person in possession of a perfect art of poetry (one who has learned all that a perfect art of poetry can teach about the making of poems) will make better poems than one possessing a perfect nature (la perfetta natura), not because the perfection of art can surpass the perfection of nature (he has said early in the paragraph that "art is not a different thing from nature"), the matter of the perfect art of poetry being the sum of all ideas of poetry with which men through the centuries and in every part of the world have been naturally endowed, but because no single person naturally endowed with all the necessary ideas for making excellent poetry (che habbia tutti i doni della natura) has ever existed.

II.7.1. L. B. Alberti (*De Pictura*, ed cit. II.2.2, pp. 98-100) teaches that the right way for the painter to achieve excellence is to paint from nature or from ideas derived from nature. It is the things that have been taken from nature that have the greatest power to attract the beholder's eye. In a historical painting the most attractive figure will be that of some well-known person (Cognitus...vultus omnium spectantium oculos ad se rapit).

II.7.2. This paragraph is occasioned by A.'s statement (4. 48b 17-19) that if the beholder had never seen the thing of which the painting is an imitation, then his pleasure in the work would be the effect "not of the imitation but of the painter's artistry (*magisterio*: ἀπεργασία) or his color or some other such cause".

II.8.1. "The austere or noble" translates *severi* o...*magnifici* and "the jocund or baseborn" *placevoli* o...*dimessi*. C.'s translation of the terms from the text is (R.1.104) "i piu magnifici" (σεμνότεροι) and "i piu dimessi" (εὐτελέστεροι). This translation tends to make the authors of tragedies and comedies of the same social classes as the tragic and comic characters (I.12.1). As the paragraph proceeds he drops *magnifici* and *dimessi* and speaks only of the *severi* and *placevoli*.

- II.8.2. Speaking of poets in general, A. says (2. 48a 4–5) that they imitate persons who are better than we or worse or like us. The *Margites* is not mentioned until 4. 48b 30.
- II.8.3. "Of inquiring minds" translates *speculativi*. See II.2.6, which explains the use of *investigativi* (capable of studying, observing, others) to describe good poets.
- II.8.4. "Probative mode" translates *modo di pruova*. Poems composed in praise or blame of some person seem to be conceived as discourses designed to prove that person's worth or unworth. Boccaccio (*Commento alla D. C.* [Bari: Laterza, 1918] 1.113) names the *probativo* and the *reprobativo* as two of the many modes to be found in the *Comedy*, presumably because the poem contains many arguments proving or disproving some point. In *Paradiso* 3. 1–3 Beatrice is said by Dante to have just proved the truth and disproved an old error (*provando e riprovando*) about the cause of the spots on the moon.
- II.8.5. Jephtha (Judges 11:30ff.) vowed that he would sacrifice not his daughter but "whatsoever cometh forth of the door of my house to meet me..."

Notes to Part III

- III.1.1. This translation of C.'s version of A.'s definition of tragedy (all the words in square brackets are supplied by the translator) calls for two comments. (1) In C.'s version of the definition tragedy is "the imitation of an action...by performers...." The Greek text from which this translation has been made is *ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως...ἐκάστου τῶν εἰδῶν δρώντων....* (È adunque tragedia rassomiglianza d'attione...di ciascuna delle spetie di coloro, che rappresentano....) Modern texts read *ἐκάστῳ* for C.'s *ἐκάστου* and place a comma before, not after, *δρώντων*. C. reads *μίμησις* as governing two genitives, *πράξεως* (of an action) and *ἐκάστου* (of each). The first genitive he will call in the commentary a *passive* genitive: the action is the thing imitated, the thing that undergoes imitation; the second he will call an *active* genitive: the imitation is "of each of the species of performers," but of here has the force of *by*: the imitation is produced *by* each of the species of performers. In C.'s version the imitators are the performers (speakers, dancers, singers, musicians); in modern interpreters they are correctly understood to be the poets. (2) In C.'s version the performers "imitate separately in the separate parts [of the tragedy] by means of language that has been made pleasurable" (*rappresentano con favella fatta dilettevole seperatamente per particelle*), and pleasurable language is defined as "language accompanied by rhythm, melody, and harmony, (*favella...che ha numero et melodia et harmonia*). There is no difference here between Bywater's text and C.'s, but Bywater translates, "...in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work." The difference in the two versions is due to the difference in C.'s and the modern reading of the single phrase *ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ*. To Bywater and others the "pleasurable accessories" include metre as well as "harmony and song" (Bywater translates *καὶ* in *ἁρμονίαν καὶ μέλος* as *or*, taking the two nouns to be two names for the same thing). C., however, holds (and in this he believes that he is at one with Aristotle) that verse is an essential component of poetry, never an accessory, so that when the language of tragedy is made pleasurable the accessories do not include metre, the language being already metrical. They are rhythm (dancing), harmony (music), and melody (song). A.'s concluding statement explains the meaning of (in C.'s rendering) "the species [of performers who imitate] separately." Bywater understands this to mean that "some portions [of the tragedy] are worked out with verse only, and others in turn with song," C.

that "the imitation is at times produced by metrical language alone at other times by melody." In the concluding sentences of the commentary on this passage C. says that μέλος is a compendious term for dancing, singing, and instrumental music and that throughout the rest of the *Poetics* A. will give the three components the single name of μελοποιία, (melopoeia). The performance of a tragedy, as conceived by C., required actors and groups of musicians, singers, and dancers—in operatic terms singers and an orchestra, a chorus, and a corps de ballet. This was some thirty years before the invention of opera, which aimed to recreate Greek tragedy. See III.1.4.

III.1.2. Robortello (p.19) attests to the great value of Averroes' comments on 2. 48a. 1-5, and makes bold to set them down even though they will perhaps seem crude to some (et si fortasse alicui rudia videri possunt). To Averroes' mind imitations are produced to set before the world examples of the honorable or the shameful, i.e., of virtue and vice (propter ostensionem decentis aut turpis, id est virtutis et vitii). From this it follows that poets must of necessity imitate either the good or the bad. All poets imitate with the purpose in mind (habent hoc sibi propositum) of encouraging men to certain voluntary actions and discouraging them from others (ut incitent ad quasdam actiones quae circa voluntaria consistunt, et retrahant a quibusdam). Vettori (pp. 19-20) too takes the passage to mean that poets imitate character: "Tradit nunc quomodo res diversas imitentur, sumitque ad probandum imitari ipsos aut meliores quam nos simus, aut deteriores, aut pares."

III.1.3. In his commentary on 6. 50a 3-4, C. draws the following distinctions between tragedy and plot (R.I.171): "But since Aristotle had already said that a tragedy is the imitation of an action, it would seem to follow that plot and tragedy are one and the same thing. In point of fact the difference between them is very great, for though it is the imitation of an action a tragedy is a much more inclusive thing than a plot, since it not only imitates the tragic subject matter but employs the double medium of language and melody, is in the dramatic mode, and represents both character and thought, whereas plot does nothing more than imitate the tragic subject matter."

III.1.4. C.'s comments on this passage rely heavily on a sentence in Diogenes Laertius, *Plato* 56 (trans. R. D. Hicks, L. C. L.): "But, just as long ago in tragedy the chorus was the only actor, and afterwards, in order to give the chorus breathing space, Thespis devised a single actor, Aeschylus a second, Sophocles a third, and thus tragedy was completed. . . ." But what C. understands Laertius to say (R.I.119-20) is that before Thespis, tragedy represented its actions "without dancing, singing, and music, the only persons on the stage being the actors (persone . . . attive o . . . operanti), as has been true sometimes in our day." Laertius says further, C. continues, that "Thespis later introduced ἑνα ὑποκριτὴν i.e., a species of imitators (*una maniera di contrafacitori*) whom he calls a single imitator," but was in reality "a group (*una moltitudine*)," each of whom danced or sang or played musical instruments. Then "Aeschylus, probably seeing that the dancing hampered (*impediva*) the proper execution of the singing and the music . . . separated the dancing from the singing and the music-making and arranged matters so that the dancers should only dance and another group of imitators should sing and make music." This, C. adds, is what A. means when he says that Aeschylus increased the number of imitators from one to two. "Finally," he continues, "Laertius says that Sophocles introduced the third imitator, i.e., the third group of imitators, separating the singers from the musicians." That, he concludes, is what A. means when he says that Sophocles introduced

a third imitator; what A. calls a third imitator was in reality the third of three groups of imitators, "one of dancers, one of singers, and a third of musicians." See III.1.1.

III.1.5. The reference is to Vettori (p. 55): "Significat...numerum, concentum, et metrum."

III.1.6. Vettori (p. 57) emends μέλος to μέτρον, and takes it to be, as A. intended, synonymous with ἀρμονία (Idem autem valere μέλος et ἀρμονίαν testimonio quoque auctoris perspicitur, qui supra [6. 49b 29] haec ipsa nomina confudit et alterum pro altero cepit.)

III.1.7. Both are skeletonized forms of Aristotle's definition. In the first, tragedy is seen as an action by performers who employ pleasurable language as their medium, in the second as simply an action by performers (though they are understood to use metrical language, dancing, singing, and music as their media). In neither sentence is tragedy seen as "the imitation of an action" in A.'s sense of that phrase. Both here and in his translation of the whole of A.'s definition C. sees the action as imitated not by the poet but by the performers on the stage. The tragedy defined by A. is a poem destined for the stage; C.'s tragedy is a spectacle.

III.2.1. C. will frequently speak of each of the qualitative parts of tragedy as a species of tragedy. In this sentence he asserts that they are so conceived and named by A. in 6. 50a 12-15, where he says, τούτοις μὲν οὖν οὐκ ὀλιγοὶ αὐτῶν, ὥς εἰπεῖν, κέχρηται τοῖς εἶδεσιν. Bywater translates, "Of these, its formative elements (εἶδεσιν), then, not a few dramatists have made due use." C. here as elsewhere takes εἶδεσιν in the sense of "species" and translates (R.1.165), "Non pochi adunque hanno adoperate queste spetie d'esse [tragedie], accioche dica cosi" (Not a few, then, have employed these species, so to speak, [of tragedies]). "So to speak" (ὥς εἰπεῖν) makes the designation less than absolutely firm. See the opening sentence of III.3.

III.3.1. See III.2.1.

III.3.2. See C. S. Baldwin, *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), pp. 64-65.

III.3.3. No such statement is to be found in the *Poetics*. For one in which the idea is implicit see 23. 59a 35-37.

III.4.1. "More toilsome" translates "vi concorre maggiore fatica et industria." C. here and below speaks not only of *fatica* (effort, labor, toil) but of *industria*, which, though it may be intended to convey the meaning of (1) care or (2) skill, is more likely used to intensify *fatica* by repeating the idea of effort. In the paragraph preceding this the idea is expressed by *fatica* alone.

III.4.2. No such statement is to be found in Alberti's *De Pictura*. "Used to say" (soleva a dire) may indicate that the judgment was transmitted orally.

III.4.3. For a clarification of this somewhat obscure statement see I.2.

III.5a.1. See Pio Rajna, *Le Fonti dell'Orlando Furioso* (Florence, 1900), pp. 40-41.

III.5a.2. ὕστερον πρότερον "Ομηρικῶς (the last first in Homeric fashion). The phrase first appeared in Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 1. 16, where Cicero restates in his own words two questions asked him by Atticus and says that he will answer the last first in the Homeric fashion. In a note on this passage Robortello (*Annotationum Libri II*, in *Opuscula* [Florence 1548] pp. 236-7) takes issue with the interpretation of the phrase by Erasmus in *Adagia*, Chil. 5, Centur. 1, Prov. 30. Erasmus takes hysteron proteron to be the name of a figure of speech which grammarians also call prothysteron and hysteropton and which they apply to any statement in which what is by nature first is placed second, as in the sentence, "Cornelia reared the Gracchi and bore them." He adds that this figure is common in Homer. This

interpretation Robortello finds unacceptable. "In my opinion," he says, "Cicero is alluding to the order in which Homer arranged his episodes. For he did not, in the manner of a historian, relate things in the order in which they had occurred, nor did he begin at the beginning of his story but near the end or in the middle, and what should have preceded these he introduces later by having it related by various personages. This is clearly another difference between poetic and historical narrative." In support of this interpretation Robortello quotes from the pseudo-Plutarch's *De Vita et Poesi Homeri* 162, in which the writer observes that Homer does not begin either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* at the beginning of the story.

III.5a.3. *L'Art Poétique* (Paris, 1930), pp. 84-85. Peletier observes that "Homer began his *Iliad* in the ninth year of the Trojan war and Virgil his *Aeneid* in the seventh year of Aeneas' wanderings. That being so, Quintilian has rightly said that Lucan is rather to be numbered among the orators than among the poets." Actually Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 10. 1. 90) makes no mention of the order in which events are arranged in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. He simply expresses admiration for the power of Lucan's style and the excellence of his general reflections, adding, however, that he is rather to be numbered (*annumerandus* in the text known to Peletier and C.; modern texts read *imitandus*) with the orators than with the poets. In III.16 C. quotes Quintilian's sentence, but interprets it to mean that Lucan makes his characters speak not as ordinary citizens but as finished rhetoricians.

III.5a.4. Merry's note to *Od.* 1. 10 in the Merry-Riddell ed. of *Odyssey* I-XII (Oxford, 1932) says, "It is left to the Muse to decide at what point the minstrel shall take up the story."

III.5b.1. Cicero, "Pro M. Marcello Oratio"; Pliny the Younger, "Panegyricus Trajano Dictus"; Ausonius, "Gratiarum Actio ad Gratianum Imperatorem pro Consulatu." The subject of all but a very few of Martial's epigrams addressed to Domitian is not gratitude but flattery.

III.5b.2. Scaliger (*Poetice* 6. 3) condemns as an improbability in Plantus' *Captivi* that Philocrates travels from Aetolia to Elis and returns with Philopolemus in a few hours (*per paucillis horis*). But he does not blame the poet for extending the action of the comedy beyond twelve hours.

III.5c.1. A single action of a single person. "Of a single person" is not an Aristotelian requirement. Having said (8. 51a 30-31) that in the imitative arts other than poetry the single imitation is always of one thing, A. adds οὕτω καὶ τὸν μῦθον, ἐπεὶ πράξεως μιμήσις ἐστὶ, μιᾶς τε εἶναι..., which C. correctly translates (R.1.233) "[Bisogna] così anchora la favola, che è rassomiglianza d' attione, sia d'una..." ([It is necessary]...too, that the plot, which is the imitation of an action, should be the imitation of one action). In the commentary C. arbitrarily adds "of one person" to "a single action" (una sola attione d' una persona). This last phrase is omitted later in the paragraph, but the conception of the poem as representing the single action of a single person remains constant in C.'s conception of unity. Further on in this chapter he will deny that a poem may not contain more than one action and will assert that every well-constructed tragedy or comedy (*ogni tragedia et comedia bene ordinata*) contains not one action but two, though one of them "seems" (*pare*) to be subordinate to the other. But in the end he will conclude that poets are free to make a plot consisting of a number of actions of a single person, or a single action of a whole people, or a number of actions of a whole people, or many actions of many persons or many peoples. Yet poets will normally restrict themselves to the representation of the single actions of single persons: tragic and comic poets because they labor under severe

restrictions of time and place and epic poets because though not subject to those restrictions they welcome the opportunities that the difficulties of producing a notable epic on so limited a subject afford them for displaying the excellence of their genius. For the frequent use of the double plot by Italian tragic writers see Marvin T. Herrick, *Italian Tragedy in the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 282.

III.5c.2. None of this is to be found in the *Poetics*. See III.5c.1.

III.5c.3. Homer is said to have learned "letters and music" from Phemius, a learned man of Smyrna and the second husband of Critheis, Homer's mother, in a life of Homer once attributed to Herodotus, but probably the work of a grammarian of the 2nd century A. D. See *Vitarum Scriptores Graeci Minores*, ed. Anton Westermann (Brunswick, 1845), pp. 1-20. The same fiction is reported with some variations in a life of Homer once attributed to Plutarch. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-40.

III.5c.4. Donatus (*De Virg. Mar. Vita* 9) says that V. undertook to write about the Romans (*res Romanas*) but abandoned the undertaking in part because of the harshness of the names (*nominum asperitate*); Servius (*Com. ad Ecl.* 6. 3) says that he abandoned a projected epic on the exploits of the kings of Alba (*Gesta regum Albanorum*) for the same reason.

III.5c.5. Raffaele Maffei, called Volaterranus (1455-1522), author of *Commentaria Urbana* in three sections and thirty-eight books. The first section, entitled *Geographia*, treats the history of various countries (Italy, France, Spain, etc.). Sometimes V. treats the history not only of the country as a whole but of its regions and even of its cities. Marcantonio Caccio da Vicovaro, better known as Sabellico (1436-1506), author of *Historia Rerum Venetarum*, which may be said to observe the unity of time because the events related are grouped by decades.

III.5d.1. Alfonso Ulloa, *Vita et Fatti dell' Invittissimo Imperatore Carlo Quinto* (Venice, 1606), p. 166b.

III.5d.2. In the preceding paragraph C. divided the sum of "things that have happened" into two classes, the natural (*naturali*) and the accidental (*accidentali*). In this paragraph "accidents" are said to be produced either by fortune or the human will. The accidental nature of the event is clear in the example of the fathers who find their lost children "by chance" (*a caso*) and in that of Helen who can be said to have suffered the uncommon misfortune of having been twice abducted. It is far from clear in the two examples of accidents which C. illogically calls volitional (*accidenti volontari*). The meaning is further obscured by the verb *sono avvenuti* (have happened): "Molti accidenti volontari sono avvenuti...a molti innamorati, che di lor volonta si sono impiccati" (Many volitional accidents have happened...to many lovers who have hanged themselves of their own will." It is worthy of note that in the next clause the volitional accident does not *happen* to the agent but is repeated (*fu reiterato*) by him. Later in this chapter *accidente* assumes its other sense of "incident."

III.5d.3. Marguerite of Navarre, *Nouvelles*, ed. Yves Le Hir (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), 3. 10. The collection is better known by the title of *Heptameron*.

III.5d.4. C. will later refer to the *Filopono* as the *Filocolo*, which is also known as the *Filocolo*. It is a prose romance telling of the love of Florio and Biancofiore. The reasons for the plurality of titles are considered by E. De Ferris in his edition of the *Filocolo* (Turin, 1927), pp. xi-xiv.

III.5d.5. "Poetry...pursuits" translates "La poesia è piu da philosophante, et da essercitato negli studi, che non è l' historia."

III.5d.6. "The writing...to invent them" translates "non fa mestiere di lunga con-

sideratione, et di sottilita d' ingegno...a ritrovarle."

III.5d.7. "Cannot...discernment" translates "ricercano speculatione d' ingegno, et molto avedimento."

III.5d.8. In the passage considered in this paragraph A. says of poetry that it is a thing "more philosophic" (φιλοσοφώτερον) and "of graver import" (σπουδαιότερον) than history. (The phrases in quotation marks are Bywater's translations of A.'s two terms.) C. misunderstands and mistranslates both. In his version of the sentence (R.1.246) poetry is understood to be a pursuit for philosophers and men duly exercised in intellectual pursuits (Laonde anchora la poesia è cosa piu da philosophante, et da assottigliato negli studi, che non è l' historia). The same error was made before him by Vettori, who says (p. 93) that poetry is a thing for the philosopher and the scholar (aptum et conveniens viro philosopho, ac studioso bonarum artium). Pazzi (in Robortello, p. 89) translated the two adjectives "wiser" and "more excellent" (sapientius atque praestantius). Robortello undertakes to give a "more accurate" and "clearer" version of the whole passage (Haec ego sic aptius, dilucidiusque verterem) and succeeds where the three others failed (Magis philosophicum quiddam, et grave [est] poesis, quam historia). In this paragraph as elsewhere poetry is for C. no less an intellectual than an imaginative pursuit. See I.9.5.

III.5d.9. "Of fact" translates *della certitudine*, "of fiction" *della 'ncertitudine*.

III.5d.10. The book was the *Libro Aureo de Marco Aurelio* by Antonio de Guevera, published in 1528 and in amplified form in 1529, and translated into a number of European languages. It was exposed as a fraud in 1540. See J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *A New Hist. of Sp. Lit.* (Oxford, 1926), pp. 187-8.

III.5d.11. Bywater translates: "It is evident from the above that the poet must be more the poet of his stories or Plots than of his verses, inasmuch as he is a poet by virtue of the imitative element in his work, and it is actions that he imitates." C.'s translation (R.1.246) falsifies A.'s text by introducing into it the idea of proportionality, and his interpretation betrays A. by its excessive stress on the *newness* of the poet's invention.

III.5d.12. J. C. Scaliger in *Poetice*, 1.1, says that poets are so named not because they invent fictions but because they are makers of verses ("Poetae igitur nomen non a fingendo, ut putarunt, quia fictis uteretur: sed initio a faciendo versa ductum est").

III.5d.13. I have been unable to find a written source of this fiction.

III.5d.14. What A. says is that if a poet chooses to take a historical event as the subject of a tragedy he is no less a poet, since historical events may meet the poetic requirements of probability and necessity.

III.5d.15. The story of Antiochus is told by Plutarch (*Demetrius* 38) and Valerius Maximus (*Facta et Dicta* 5. 7, Ext. 1).

III.5d.16. Ariosto borrowed freely from both Ovid and Statius. For detailed studies of these borrowings see Pio Rajna, *Le Fonti dell'Orlando Furioso* (Florence, 1900) and A. Romizi, *Le Fonti Latine dell'Orlando Furioso* (Turin, 1896). On p. 402, n. 1, Rajna quotes this sentence from C. and shows that Ariosto is indebted to the epigram "Ad Amorem" in bk. 3 of Michele Marullo's *Epigrammaton* (Bologna, 1504), for O. F. 23.126-28. On p. 352, n. 2, he quotes the second part of the clause and observes that C. attributes the story of Zerbindo to a minstrel whose name was certainly not Henry and may have been Helie (also spelled Elie), the supposed author of the romance *Palamedès*. Helie's patron was not, he is certain, the Emperor Henry IV. (Though Rajna does not name him he was almost certainly Helie's contemporary King Henry III of England.) The story in question he takes to be that of "the old woman" (the sufferings of Zerbindo at the

- hands of an evil old woman named Gabrina, in Cantos 21-23), though he refers to one Lavezuola as taking it to be that of the love of Isabella and Zerbino told by Isabella in Canto 13.
- III.5d.17. For the originals of Plautus' and Terence's comedies see W. S. Teuffel, *Hist. of Roman Lit.*, trans. G. C. W. Warr (London: G. Bell, 1891-92), 1. 134-41 and 162-65. Fridericus Leo (*De Senecae Tragoediis Observationes Criticae* [Berlin, 1878]) devotes a chapter, "De Exemplaribus Graecis," to the sources of Seneca's tragedies.
- III.5d.18. There are two possible sources for the plot of the *Golden Ass*: *Lucius or the Ass*, once attributed to Lucian, and a collection of stories of metamorphoses now lost and known only from a brief description of them in Photius, *Bibliotheca* 129.
- III.5d.19. A. counsels (17.55a 34-55b 23) that before he begins to compose a tragedy or an epic the poet will do well to reduce the story he has in mind to a universal form and illustrates his meaning by giving the stories of *Iphigenia in Tauris* and the *Odyssey* in the form they might have been given by Euripides and Homer before they began inventing the episodes. The second meaning that C. extracts from his words comes nearer to being A.'s whole meaning.
- III.5d.20. Antiochus, Seleucus' son, loves Stratonice, his stepmother. Unwilling to declare and unable to conquer his guilty passion, he resolves on suicide by starvation under pretense of illness. A physician discovers the true cause of Antiochus' illness and reports it to Seleucus, who promptly arranges to have his son married to Stratonice. The story is told by Plutarch, *Demetrius* 38; Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta* 5.7, Ext. 1; and Petrarch, *Trionfo d'Amore* 2.103-129.
- III.5d.21. Tito falls in love with Sofronia, who is betrothed to his greatest friend, Gisippo. Gisippo learns of his friend's love and by arrangement surrenders his bride to him on his wedding day. *Dec.* 10.8. Giachetto, the son of an English nobleman, loves Giannetta, his mother's serving maid. Fearing that his love would fail to win the approval of his parents, Giachetto conceals it and falls into a consuming illness. The cause of his illness is later discovered by a physician who felt the stronger beating of his heart when Giannetta entered his room. The physician reports his discovery to Giachetto's parents, who allow him to marry Giannetta. Giannetta is later discovered to be the daughter of a French nobleman. *Dec.* 2.8.
- III.5d.22 *Inf.* 5.127ff. In the Arthurian legend Gallehault is the person (he was not a prince but a king) who arranged the first meeting between Launcelot and Guinevere. Francesca says that the book she and Paolo were reading (the book tells of Launcelot's first kiss to Guinevere, but its author is not named) proved to be the Gallehault, i.e., the go-between that brought her and Paolo together.
- III.5e.1. A. writes *διὰ τοὺς ὑποκριτάς* and C. correctly translates (R.1.291) "per gli rappresentatori" (for the sake of the actors). But in this sentence in the commentary, he alters *rappresentatori* (actors) to *altrui* (others) to avail himself of A.'s authority for his condemnation of Virgil and other poets. The actors are not considered until the last paragraph of this chapter.
- III.5e.2. The widowed Dido, who had sworn fidelity to her late husband, took her own life rather than accept the offer of marriage from a neighboring king (Justin, *Historiae Philippicae* 18.6). Servius (ad *Aen.* 1.267) gives the date of the fall of Troy as 340 years before the founding of Rome, but adds that Carthage was founded just 70 years before Rome.
- III.5f.1. See I.13.2.
- III.5f.2. These additional remarks on the marvelous, which seek to establish that

the marvelous is indispensable to tragedy for the reasons already given but also because it gives pleasure, owe their form to C.'s misreading of 18. 56a 19-21: ἐν δὲ ταῖς περιπετείαις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀπλοῖς πράγμασι στοχάζονται ὧν βούλονται θαυμαστῶς τραγικὸν γὰρ τοῦτο καὶ φιλόανθρωπον. I have quoted my translation of C.'s version (R.1.513) in full to highlight its departure from A.'s meaning as understood by Bywater: "Yet in their Peripeties, as also in their simple plots, the poets I mean [Euripides, Aeschylus, Agathon] show a wonderful skill (θαυμαστῶς) in aiming (στοχάζονται) at the kind of effect they desire (ὧν βούλονται)—a tragic situation that arouses the human feeling in one (φιλόανθρωπον)...." C. brings the text into line with his misinterpretation of it by emending (R.1.519) the adverb θαυμαστῶς to the substantive τῷ θαυμαστῷ functioning as an instrumental dative. He then translates (R.1.513) στοχάζονται ὧν βούλονται τῷ θαυμαστῷ "toccano il segno che desiderano col meraviglioso." The rest of the sentence he mistranslates, "Perciò che ciò è cosa da tragedia et piacente agli huomini." *Piacente agli huomini* is not acceptable as a translation of φιλόανθρωπον. The "double target" described at the conclusion of this paragraph finds no support in A.'s text.

III.5f.3. For more on the marvelous, see V.3b.

III.5g.1. "Uniform" translates *uguali*, "diversified" *disuguali*, "simple" *simplici*, "compound" *doppia* (see next note), "self-sufficient" *interne*, "dependent" *forestiere*, "volitional" *volontarie*, "coercive" *necessarie*.

III.5g.2. *Doppia* (translated "compound") describes a plot that contains "more than one reversal", which may mean not only two but even three. C. speaks of the *singularita* of the reversal in *Oedipus* as contrasted with its *duplicita* or *triplicita* in other plots. [Alla quale simplicita [C. has just spoken of the *singularita* of the change of fortune] risponde, per così dire, la duplicita, o la triplicita.) I translate *doppia* by "compound" so as to reserve the term "double" for another kind of plot, which C. elsewhere (III.10) calls *doppia*, the plot with the double issue, happy for the good and unhappy for the bad.

III.5g.3. *Filocopo* bk. 2. See note III.5d.4.

III.5g.4. C.'s translation of πεπλεγμένη (complex) in the sentence just quoted from A. is *raviluppata*. In the second paragraph of this chapter he renamed the plots which A. calls "simple" and "complex" *uguali* (uniform) and *disuguali* (diversified). See III.5g.1. But having correctly translated πεπλεγμένη by *raviluppata* and not *disuguale*, he continues in the commentary to use *raviluppata* for the kind of plot which he has renamed *disuguale*.

III.5g.5. The messenger came from Corinth with no other intention than that of notifying Oedipus that Polybus had died and that he had been chosen to succeed him to the throne. C., following A. (11. 52a 24-26) attributes to him an intention not in the text of Sophocles' *Oedipus*. The truth of Oedipus' parentage is revealed in the next episode by the herdsman.

III.5h.1. Not a translation but a paraphrase of A.'s text.

III.5h.2. In Hyginus Canace's name is listed among those of the daughters who were killed by their fathers; in *Heroides* 11 she is pictured holding a dagger given to her by her father to take her own life. In his numerous references to the story of Canace and Macareus, C. never names Sperone Speroni's tragedy *Canace e Macareo* (1546).

III.6.1. Valerius Maximus *Facta et Dicta* 6. 8 Ext. 5. In the legend as reported by Valerius Maximus, Polycrates cast his ring into the sea but soon after finds it in the stomach of a fish that had swallowed it (...quem tamen continuo recuperavit capto pisce qui eum devoraverat.) In Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* the thunderbolt is hurled by Zeus.

III.6.2. The comedy in question is the *Miles Gloriosus*. C.'s recollection of the

plot, both here and on a later page (VI.2), is inaccurate. Pyrgopolinices never had his pleasure of the harlot who had been represented to him as a gentlewoman, for he had no sooner entered the house which he had been told was her residence than he was given a severe drubbing by the house slaves and was thrown back into the street.

- III.6.3. A person may be recognized by marks of various kinds that identify him, by his actions and his words. The occasions for bringing the marks into play as means of recognition and as the causes of actions and of words are offered by the plot. The harper in the *Odyssey* sings; the song awakens memories in Ulysses; he weeps [acts], and is thus recognized. The situation in which he finds himself stimulates Orestes to reason, and his conclusion, which he expresses in audible words, leads to his recognition of Iphigenia. "Memory" and "reasoning," both occasioned by the course of events in the plot, have been the cause of "action" and "words." C. taxes A. with limiting all possible causes for the use of the three means of recognition to these two. But the distinction between the means of recognition and the cause that brings these means into play is C.'s and not A.'s.
- III.6.4. Lane Cooper's translation of the passage referred to runs as follows (*The Rhetoric of Aristotle, An Expanded Translation* (New York: D. Appleton, 1932), p. 8): "By 'non-artistic' proofs are meant all such as are not supplied by our own efforts, but existed beforehand, such as witnesses, admissions under torture, written contracts, and the like. By 'artistic' proofs are meant those that may be furnished by the method of Rhetoric through our own efforts. The first sort have only to be used; the second have to be found." Of these two types of proofs Cooper says, "We might call them 'scientific' and 'unscientific.' Aristotle distinguishes means of persuasion that inherently belong *in* the art, and those that, while associated with it, are really external and adventitious." By making the distinction between the two kinds of proof rest upon the amount of effort required of the orator C. seriously distorts A.'s meaning, and by doing so brings it into line with his inflexible belief that the most admirable mimetic artifact is the one in the production of which the artist has laboriously surmounted the most formidable difficulties.
- III.6.5. Gen. 38:27. The child whose hand was tied with a scarlet thread was Zarah, Pharez's twin-brother.
- III.6.6. In Sophocles' *Tyro*, a chest or a cradle, used by Tyro, their mother, to expose them, may have been the means by which their identity was established. A. C. Pearson, *Fragments of Sophocles* 2. 270-74.
- III.6.7. In this paragraph and the preceding one I have made free use of paraphrase.
- III.6.8. A.'s fifth kind of recognition is, in Bywater's translation, "false reasoning on the side of the other party (τοῦ θατέρου)," i.e., on the side not of the speaker but of his auditors. For θατέρου, however, C.'s text reads θεάτρου: "on the side of the theatre," i.e., of the audience. And since the audience is composed of the uneducated multitude, C. can say that the false reasoning is done, among others, by "people of the common sort."
- III.6.9. The "few words" in Hyginus are, "Anticleia Autolyce filia mater Ulixis nuntio falso audito de Ulixe ipsa se interfecit." C. mistranslates the title of the tragedy (16. 55a 13-24), which is *Ulysses the False Messenger*, and refers to a story not suggested by the true title. *The Mendacious Bearer of Tidings of Ulysses* translates *Il Falso Rapportatore d'Ulisse* in C.'s rendering (R.1.451). In this passage C. does not repeat the title, but simply refers to "the false tidings of Ulysses" (il falso rapporto Ulissesco). C. translated the title with his eyes not on A.'s text but on Hyginus (nuntio falso audito).

- III.6.10. In this comment on 16. 55a 16–20 C. assumes that A. is passing judgment on the five kinds of recognition he has already described, which do not include the recognition that results from the forward movement of the plot. Actually the recognition described in these lines constitutes a sixth kind.
- III.7.1. C. here eliminates the plot as a factor in determining whether one tragedy is like another, thus departing from A.'s judgment as translated in the opening sentence of this paragraph. On a later page (R.1.505) C. justifies that departure by suggesting that the clause *τοῦτο δὲ ὧν ἡ αὐτὴ πλοκὴ καὶ λύσις* may have originally been followed by the second clause *ἐκεῖνο δέ, ὧν ἡ ἄλλη πλοκὴ καὶ λύσις*. He then paraphrases the two clauses: This (*τοῦτο*), that the tragedy is the same as another, is to be said of those tragedies that have the same complication and resolution; and that (*ἐκεῖνο*), that the tragedy differs from another, is to be said of those tragedies that have different complications and resolutions. Thus, he concludes, the plot does nothing to make a tragedy the same as another or different from it.
- III.8.1 This whole chapter consists of C.'s commentary on 15. 54a 37–54b 8, a digression in the midst of a discussion of tragic character in which A. asserts that the resolution of a plot should be the logical outgrowth of antecedent action and not, as in the *Medea* of Euripides, something imposed upon the tragedy from without. In this passage A. employs the term (resolution) in the same sense in which he will use it later (18. 55b 24–32), as the counterpart of the complication. C., however, insists that in this passage the term has also the meaning of "resolution of difficulties" or "escape from impending perils." This definition of the term occurs in a brief comment on 15. 54a 37 (R.1.435): "As we have already explained, *λύσις* in this passage is not used as the name of that segment of the plot that will later be defined as the counterpart of the "complication"..., the only two segments into which the plot as a whole is divided. The term here designates any part or parts of a plot in which difficulties are resolved. An example of a "resolution" in this sense of the term is *Medea's* escape from Corinth. After she had burned Creusa to death and slain her children *Medea* found it a difficult thing to make her escape from Jason, but her difficulty was resolved when a chariot drawn by winged dragons miraculously came to her rescue and carried her off unharmed."
- III.8.2. A. speaks of "the gods;" C. sometimes follows him in the use of the plural, but sometimes, perhaps with the contemporary dramatist in mind, speaks of the solutions of difficulties in Christian language.
- III.8.3. C. shows that Catullus shares the belief he has just described by quoting at this point the concluding lines of his poem on the nuptials of Peleus and Thetis (64. 382–408), where Catullus contrasts the older and purer times, when the gods mingled freely with men, with the later, when they disdained to associate with a race corrupted by every vice.
- III.8.4. C. quotes *Aen.* 8. 626–28, which he then proceeds to misinterpret. Mackail translates: "There the Lord of Fire has fashioned the story of Italy and the triumphs of the Romans, not witless of prophecy or ignorant of the age to be."
- III.9.1. Aristotle says simply (53a 27–28) that tragedies with an unhappy ending are recognized as the most tragic *ἐπὶ τῶν σκληρῶν καὶ τῶν ἀγώνων*, which C. translates correctly (R.1.349) "*nei palchi et nelle rappresentazioni*" (on the stage and in performances). But in the commentary on this sentence (R.1.378) he expresses the opinion that the words may have more than one meaning. "The word *ἀγώνων* in this sentence may designate no more than the performance of a tragedy on the stage, with no allusion to a competition with other tragedies, or the performance of a tragedy in a competition. That being so, the words *ἐπὶ γὰρ τῶν σκληρῶν καὶ τῶν ἀγώνων* τραγικώταται αἱ τοιαῦται φαινόντας convey three meanings, viz. that

tragedies with an unhappy ending will be recognized as tragic in the highest degree (1) when performed singly and not in a competition, (2) when performed in a competition with other tragedies, (3) and when performed in the first manner (ἐπὶ τῶν σκηρῶν) and in the second (καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγώνων)."

III.9.2. The sentence in square brackets is deleted in the 1576 edition.

III.9.3. On the opening page (R.1.350) of his commentary on 12. 52b 25–14. 53b 14 C. asserts that in this passage A. treats five principal questions and thereby lays down the conditions which a tragedy must meet if it is to have the proper effect upon the emotions: (1) The type of person who can move us to pity and fear by suffering a reversal; (2) the kind of reversal that can arouse pity and fear; (3) the kind of cause that effects the reversal most capable of arousing pity and fear; (4) the nature of the deeds of horror proper to a good tragedy and the kinds of persons who should be involved in them; (5) the type of recognition that is most acceptable.

III.10.1. Nero (Suetonius, *Nero* 34. 4) avowed that he was haunted by his mother's ghost and the Furies.

III.13.1. These five requirements are drawn from A.'s description of the perfect tragic plot in 13. 53a 7–17. The description is introduced by the assertion that in a proper tragedy the agent must be neither pre-eminently good nor totally depraved. He must, A. says, (what follows is the translation of C.'s rendering (R.1.349) of A.'s text) be "some one intermediate between the two (*mezzano tra questi*). He must excel [others] neither in virtue nor in justice, nor must he fall into misery through vice or depravity, but through some error (*per certo errore*), [being one] of those who enjoy great fame and felicity, like Oedipus and Thyestes and famous men of similar families. Therefore if the plot is to be good it must of necessity be simple (*simplice*) rather than, as some would have it, double (*doppia*), and its reversal must be not from misery to happiness but from happiness to misery, and the cause of the reversal must be not depravity but [some] great error, [the agent] being a man such as he has just been described or [some one] better rather than worse than he." The last requirement in C.'s text, that he must be the only person in the tragedy or one of not more than two who suffer a reversal from happiness to misery, results from a misinterpretation of the phrase μῦθος ἀπλοῦς (53a 12–13), by which A. designates a "simple plot" in the sense of a plot without a reversal (like *Prometheus Bound*) and which C. takes to designate (R.1.372) "a plot which represents the reversal of a single person (*la mutazione d'una persona*) or of two (*o di due*) of the same type (*d'una qualita medesima*) from happiness to misery, and is the opposite of the double plot (*si contrappone alla favola doppia*), which denotes a plot that represents two men of opposite types (*due maniere d'huomini contrarie*), one good and the other bad, the former of whom rises from misery to happiness and the latter falls from happiness to misery." The type of this "double plot" is the *Odyssey*, where the good Ulysses defeats the wicked suitors and maidservants.

III.13.2. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 15. 7. 1–6.

III.14.1. "Very holy life" translates *santissima vita* (ἐπιεικής). In this discussion C. stresses the effect of the tragic spectacle on the common people (the people, as he frequently reminds us, for whose pleasure all poetry was invented), which accounts for his giving a Christian form to what may be called his theology of tragedy.

III.14.2. The idea nearest to this is the following in *Metaphysics* 12. 9 (Trans. W. D. Ross): "Therefore it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks [since it is the most excellent of things], and its thinking is a thinking on thinking."

III.14.3. "Unpleasing to men," translates οὐτε ... φιλάνθρωπον. C. here follows Vet-

tori (p. 121), who translates the phrase, "Neque...gratum hominibus." Οὐτε ... φιλόανθρωπον conveyed a different sense to Pazzi, who (in Robortello, p. 126) translates it "expers...humanitatis" and to Robortello, who commenting (p. 129) on the passage (12. 53a 3-4) in which A. says that the fall of a bad man cannot arouse the emotions of pity and fear in us but only a certain human sympathy, says that this sympathy is not pity (*commiseratio*) but rather (adopting Pazzi's word) *humanitas*, adding, "quae a Graecis vocatur φιλανθρωπία."

III.14.4. "May afford some pleasure to men" contains the same translation of φιλόανθρωπον as in the passage quoted in III.14.3. See also III.5f.2.

III.14.5. On the page preceding this (R.1.417) C. summarizes A.'s doctrine of character in these words: "Aristotle defines character (*il costume*: ἦθος, ἥθη), in so far as it is an element of tragedy, as the manifestation of a person's desires and aversions. These desires and aversions are manifested by words and actions, and if they were not manifested incidentally through the words and the actions of the agents they would remain hidden and unknown. Hence some speeches are quite characterless, either because the speakers have no occasion to manifest what they desire and what they are averse to or because the poet, whether from choice or incapacity, puts characterless speeches in their mouths." "Desires and aversions" translates "...quello che altri appetisce o rifiuta" (προαιρεῖται ἢ φεύγει).

III.14.6. "Goodness" translates *bonta* (χρηστά); "appropriateness" *convenevolezza* (ἁρμοτικότητα); "ordinary virtue" *mezzanità* (ἁμοιον); "consistency" *continuatione* (ἁμαλον); in the translation (R.1.416) C. renders ἁμοιον *simile* ("like us"). Both *mezzanità* and *simile* are mistranslations of this term, especially as C. takes them to describe the tragic agent and not an aspect of both the tragic and other characters in the tragedy: that they should be recognizable as fellow beings and, if historical, mythical, or legendary, not different from the persons known to history, myth, or legend. C. holds that the qualities named in this passage are exclusively those of the well-portrayed tragic agent. C. is correct in pointing, accusingly, to "certain commentators" as understanding A. to say that they should be the qualities of every person in the tragedy. In so far as these commentators, Robortello and Vettori, hold that all persons in a tragedy should be *convenientes*, *similes*, and *aequabiles*, they are at one with Aristotle. It is only when they assert that they should all be good that they depart from A. and merit C.'s censure. See below. III.14.13.

III.14.7. "Personal effort" translates *industria*.

III.14.8. Determinants of character, etc. C. speaks not of three determinants but of three kinds of character, *naturali*, *accidentali*, and *industriose*. But it would be awkward and confusing to speak of natural and accidental characters and hardly possible to find an English equivalent for *industriose*.

III.14.9. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ars Rhetorica* 9. 11.

III.14.10. Was wont, etc. The wording (*ne soleva biasimare*) suggests that the judgment had been transmitted orally.

III.14.11. "Remote, proximate, and internal" translate *lontana*, *vicina*, and *presente*.

III.14.12. Menelaus plays a villainous role in Sophocles' *Ajax* and in Euripides' *Andromache*.

III.14.13. Both Robortello and Vettori, the former more plainly than the latter, hold this view. Robortello (pp.165-6) notes that by saying that characters in tragedy should be good and omitting to say that some of them should be bad A. indicates that the poet should never represent vice in his poems (*poetam non debere in suis poematibus improbos mores effingere*). In this, he adds, A. is at one with Plato, who never approved of the representation of both good and bad

men (tam bonos quam malos, temperatos, iustos, incontinentes, et iniustos, fures, adulteros et huiusmodi mistim), for it is Plato's firm belief that for the proper moral formation of men no other persons need be represented than the good and the wise (ut utilitatem afferat institutioni hominum non est necessarium ullum hominum genus praeter bonos et sapientes). Thus, A., who refused to follow Plato in rejecting all poetry because it excites the passions, holding, rather, that poetry, in fact, expelled every kind of perturbation from the soul, here follows him in rejecting the representation of evil in tragedy and other species of poetry, except, possibly, comedy (improbiorum non vult morum imitationem fieri in tragoedia, neque aliis poematibus, nisi forte in comoedia), where the subject matter is such as to require it. Vettori (p. 143) interprets A. to say that poets should represent their characters as good (videre ut mores boni sint) because the representation of virtue improves human life (vitae prodest); for the spectators in whose presence the actions of the good are praised and applauded are spurred to imitate those actions (ad ea facta imitanda excitantur) and endeavor to elevate their own actions to the same high level (conantur et ipsi tales evadere).

III.14.14. A. condemns the Menelaus in *Orestes* not for his wickedness but for being more wicked than necessary (μὴ ἀναγκαῖον). A.'s text, as quoted by C., contains this qualifying phrase, but C. disregards it in his translation (R.1.416) as well as in these observations occasioned by it.

III.14.15. C. here departs from A.'s meaning. A. does in fact argue that the poet's characters should be flawed and yet be represented as good. The argument rests on the assumption that tragedy imitates persons better than the ordinary. That being so, the poet might profitably "follow the example of good portrait-painters," who reproduce a man's "distinctive features" (ἰδίαν μορφήν) and at the same time "make him handsomer than he is." The poet, too, must when portraying men with certain "infirmities of character" portray them both as they are "and at the same time as good men" (Bywater). C.'s departure from the true sense of the passage is caused by reading οἰκείαν (for ἰδίαν) μορφήν. In Bywater's translation ἰδίαν μορφήν is the sitter's "distinctive features;" in C.'s translation (R.1.432) οἰκείαν μορφήν is "la domestica forma," a peculiar phrase the meaning of which he stretches to signify the painter's ideas of a perfectly beautiful man or woman. The poet, he takes A. to mean, should follow the example of the painter and portray his characters with constant reference to the idea of perfection in his mind. Later in this chapter C. will speak of Perino del Vaga as a painter who frequently used his beautiful wife as a model for his female figures and will then go on to speak of the examples of perfect beauty which painters "kept at home or in their minds." Both Pazzi and Vettori translate from the same text as C.'s, but neither strays far from A.'s true meaning. Pazzi (in Robortello, p. 181) has A. say that painters "proprias verisque simillimas imagines referre student;" Vettori, in fewer words, (p. 151), that they paint "suam propriamque formam." It is not at all unlikely that as he translated Aristotle C. had in mind Alberti's counsel to painters and sculptors never to work except with constant reference to a model: "Semper tibi proponendum est elegans et singulare aliquod exemplar, quod et spectes et imiteris." (*De Pictura*, ed. Cecil Grayson [New York: Phaidon, 1972], p. 100.)

III.14.16. See II.2.4.

III.14.17. "Keep...at home." C.'s mistranslation of οἰκείαν μορφήν as *domestica forma*. See III.14.15.

III.15.1. "Skilfully" translates *avenevolmente*, which in the translation (R.1.393) is C.'s rendering for A.'s καλῶς. In the commentary *avenevolmente* is replaced by *bene et lodevolmente* (well and laudably).

- III.15.2. C. labels the first and third of these plots *pericolose* and the second and fourth *dannose*. Since these terms are not used again they have not been translated.
- III.15.3. Actually Haemon leaves the stage when Creon threatens to kill Antigone before his eyes.
- III.15.4. Aeolus is said to have killed Canace (Hyginus, *Fab.* 283. 3); on the other hand Macareus (ibid. 242. 2) and Canace (ibid. 243. 6 and Ovid, *Heroides* 11) are said to have died by their own hand.
- III.15.5. It is worthy of note that the sources C. goes to in these paragraphs and elsewhere to illustrate the nature of tragedy or some aspect of it are not only Greek and Senecan tragedy but also epic poetry, mythology, legend, prose fiction, history, and the Bible.
- III.15.6. This and two other examples below are supplied by the translator.
- III.15.7. I have chosen to translate (somewhat freely) these sentences from the *Poetics* because in the second of the ensuing paragraphs C. will undertake to invalidate A.'s argument for ranking the fourth situation above the third for its tragic effectiveness.
- III.15.8. "Adding" translates *e poi soggiugne*. C. seems to imply that the pronouncement on the first form of recognition follows immediately the one on the tragic reversal. Actually the latter pronouncement is made in 13. 53a 13-15., the former in 9. 52a 32-33. This real or apparent inconsistency continues to be remarked and discussed by modern commentators.
- III.15.9. "The reasons just presented by A." are, as C. understands them, that the deed of horror must not originate in human depravity and that no drama can be a true tragedy that does not represent suffering. The first of these requirements results from a misreading of the reason given by A. for denying tragic effectiveness to Haemon's failure to carry out his intention in the *Antigone*: τό τε γὰρ μισαρόν ἔχει, καὶ οὐ τραγικόν ("It is odious and also (through the absence of suffering) untragic" — Bywater.) The argument that C. advances to invalidate A.'s judgment on the relative merits of the third and fourth situations as constituents of authentic tragedy misrepresents A.'s true judgment.
- III.16.1. "Whether a thing is or is not" translates *che alcuna cosa sia, o non sia* (τι ὥς ἔστιν ἢ ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν).
- III.16.2. Of the four functions of thought listed in this sentence the first and second are named by A. in 6. 50b 11-12; the first, third, and fourth in 19. 56a 37-56b 2. In a further comment on 6. 50b 11-12 C. says (R.1.179), "Though it is accurate enough to say that thought consists in the invention of the proofs with which men demonstrate some particular thing, it is nevertheless well to understand that thought consists of the proofs with which men demonstrate that something is or is not; if it is, then what it is or is not; or what kind of thing it is or is not. This statement of the aim of thought in poetry corresponds with that of the invention of proofs in rhetorical exercises; in these too thought addresses itself to answering the questions whether a thing is or is not; what it is or is not; what kind of thing it is or is not. These questions are known as questions of conjecture, of definition, and of quality." Cicero (*Orator* 14. 45) says that every part of a controversy consists of an attempt to answer the questions *aut sitne aut quid sit aut quale sit*. See also Quintilian 3. 6. 44. For the names by which the questions are known see Quintilian 3. 6. 42 and 44.
- III.16.3. In 6. 50b 7-8 A. says, οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχαῖοι πολιτικῶς ἐποιοῦν λέγοντας οἱ δὲ νῦν ῥητορικῶς. C.'s rendering of the sentence (R.1.182) may be translated, "For the ancients represented their characters as speaking in accordance with the art of politics (*secondo la [arte] cittadinesca*) but the moderns according to the art of

- rhetoric [*la [arte] retorica*]." It is plain from what he says in the commentary, however, that to C. to speak πολιτικῶς was to speak not like a statesman but like an ordinary citizen or a layman, like one who understood politics but was unschooled in rhetoric.
- III.16.4. In 6. 49b 36–50a 3 A. says that we recognize an action to be of a certain quality both by the characters and thoughts of the agents (οὓς ἀνάγκη ποιούς τινὰς εἶναι κατὰ τε τὸ ἦθος, καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν). C.'s rendering of his words (R.1.165) may be translated, "There are naturally two causes for human actions being of a certain quality, character and thought."
- III.16.5. Vettori, p. 61: "...sed etiam verbis ostendere atque aperire quid sentias de aliqua re dianoiae partem esse affirmat."
- III.16.6 In *Rhet.* 1. 2 (trans. Lane Cooper [New York: D. Appleton, 1932], p. 9) A. says that the speaker's character is "the most potent of all the means of persuasion."
- III.16.7. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1. 2.
- III.16.8. "Basis" translates *stato* (*status*, στάσις). I adopt the term *basis* from Quintilian's translator H. E. Butler (L. C. L.), who says (3. 6. 4. n. 1) that "there is no exact English equivalent for *status*. *Basis* or *ground* are perhaps the nearest equivalents." For the three bases named by C. see III.16.2.
- III.17a.1. I have translated *transportate ad altra gente* "have been borrowed from other peoples" because "borrowed" answers better than "exported" to the description of "foreign" and "strange."
- III.17a.2. In this paragraph "native" translates *natie*, "foreign" *forestiere*, "current" *proprie* (χόριον), "strange" *forestiere* (γλῶττα), "stable or literal" *ristantisi*, "metaphorical" *traslate* (μεταφορά), "old" *attempate*, "new" *novelle*, "coined" *fatte* (πεποιημένον), "unaltered" *schiette*, "altered" *alterate*, "lengthened" *allungate* (ἐπεκτεταμένον), "contracted" *accorciate* (ὕψηρημένον), "transformed" *trasmutate* (ἐξηλλαγμένον), "ornament" *voci orlate* (κόσμος).
- III.17a.3. The seven figures in the preceding paragraph have been said to make for obscurity by reason of their "plurality." C. next turns to seven more that make for clarity by reason of their "rarity," each having a single meaning. They are (1) the archaic (*vecchie*) and seldom used; (2) the newly coined (*nuove*) and not yet in general use (only the second of these is recognized by A.); (3) the foreign (*forestiere*), which A. calls "strange"; (4) the transposed (*scompigliate*), which form the figure hyperbaton, not recognized by A.; (5) the modified (*passionate*), recognized by A. For 6 and 7 see p. 193.
- III.17a.4. The reference is to *Esaminatione sopra la Ritorica a Caio Herennio fatta per Lodovico Castelvetro* (*sic*), (Modana [*sic*], 1653). The book was left in manuscript by C. and published with a dedication to the Duke of Modena signed by Giovanni Maria Castelvetro, who speaks of C. as one of his forbears (*uno de gl'antennati miei*). A discussion of metaphor (p. 130) concludes with the words, "We shall not fail to set forth our views on these matters if, God willing, we shall ever write an exposition of the *Poetics*." Like the anonymous *Ad Herennium* C.'s *Esaminatione* is in four books. C.'s reference is to Book 4, pp. 125–143, where he discusses figures of speech, though with hardly any reference to the discussion of that subject in the *Ad Herennium* (see *Ad Herennium De Ratione Dicendi*, Trans. by Harry Caplan [L.C.L.], pp. lvi–lvii and pp. 275–347). The nature of C.'s discussion of the figures is well exemplified by the paraphrase of his discussion in n. 6 below. To paraphrase his discussion of all the figures would not, as C. indicates, be feasible. In the *Esaminatione* as in the commentary he generally speaks of figures as *parole* (words) followed by an adjective; the metaphor, for instance, is named *parole traslate*. That explains why all the adjectives below are feminine and in the plural number. The adjectives modifying

parole are the following: *comperative* (analogies, similes), *traslate* (metaphors), *smoderate* (disproportionate), *infingevoli* (contradictory), *dubbie* (ambiguous), *antiche* (old), *forestiere* (foreign), *singolari* (unique: newly coined by a single person), *disallogate* (transposed, named *scompigliate* in the commentary), *imperfette* (incomplete, named *manchevoli* in the commentary).

III.17a.5. *Ragioni d'alcune cose segnate nella canzone di Messer Annibal Caro "Venite a l'ombra de gran gigli d'oro"* (Venice, 1560). C.'s discussion of this phenomenon is not as extended as his words suggest. His conclusion (pp. 50b-51a) is that the practice is to be condemned: "But the use of words of one language with the meanings given them by speakers of another is not to be tolerated except, as we have said (p. 8a), when the former language is closely related to the latter and is understood by at least the educated class of the nation into whose language the foreign word would be adopted in a new sense."

III.17a.6. *Esaminatione*, etc. (see n. 4 above), pp. 125-27. C. says that the figure which he calls *comperatione* ("comparison," which I have translated "analogy") may also be given the name of simile (*similitudine*), or example (*esempio*). In the ensuing paraphrase of his discussion of this figure, I shall continue to use "analogy" as the name of the figure and "absolute words," the literal translation of C.'s *parole assolute*, which he defines as words "signifying only one thing" (*significanti una cosa sola*).

"Analogy" is defined as the disclosure of a similar but not identical substance or accident found in two or more things that are compared. In the analogy "Leonidas, you fight like a lion," the phrase "like a lion" signifies the whole of the lion's and the whole of Leonidas' courage in a fight. Some will perhaps say that they see no obscurity resulting from the analogy but only clarity. I will therefore try to show that the obscurity is indeed there. In the ninth book of the *Aeneid* (ll. 679-682) Virgil conveys the sense of the extraordinary stature of Pandarus and Bitias by comparing them to a pair of twin oaks on the banks of the Padus or the Athesis. "Oaks" designates first the full height of the twin oaks and then the full height of Pandarus and Bitias. But the height of Pandarus and Bitias remains undetermined, as it would not have been if it had been designated by absolute words like "sixty *braccia*" [a *braccio* is the equivalent of approximately three-fifths of a meter]. No analogical statement can give the height of Pandarus and Bitias as clearly as "sixty *braccia*." But to return to Leonidas and the lion. If the courage of fighters were measurable by degrees (like heat and cold in the human body) the words "Leonidas, you fight to the fourth degree of courage" would convey a clearer meaning than the analogical words, which should be used only to articulate something for which absolute words are lacking, as they seldom are, for where there has been a human need of them they have been invented and the less definite have been kept in use when exact terms were not needed. Thus a good historian, like a dispassionate one, whose subject is things that have happened never uses analogical words when he knows that the absolute are sufficient except when he is describing some one delivering an oration. His example is not followed by the orators, and especially orators addressing a popular audience, nor by the poets, the former because they are passionate partisans and judge things of concern to themselves to be greater than the truth and not to be expressed by absolute words and the latter because they are narrators of divine or almost divine things far beyond the ability of absolute words to express.

III.17a.7. *Ragioni*, etc. See 17a.5. Chapter II of this work is entitled "Mala Formatione di Traslationi" ("Faulty Formation of Metaphors"). In it C. criticizes a number of Caro's metaphors, finding some far-fetched, others obscure, and still others inappropriate. In the course of his discussion, which extends from pp.

36b to 93b, he has much to say that complements the present statement but does not amplify it.

- III.17a.8. Having considered the seven kinds of words (figures) produced by plurality, C. names seven more produced by rarity. The first five are the old, the new [recognized by A.], the foreign [A. calls them "strange"], the transposed (hyperbaton, unrecognized by A.), and the modified (divisible into the lengthened, the curtailed, the altered, and the compound—all recognized by A.). The last two are (6) the redundant and (7) the incomplete (*imperfette*, called "defective" [*manchevoli*] on p. 190. C. does not discuss the second fourteen referred to on p. 190.
- III.17b.1. In 21. 57b 6–9 A. defines the metaphor as the figure in which the name of one thing is given to another, e.g., the name of the genus to a species, of a species to a genus, and of one species to another species; also the name of one thing to another analogous to it.
- III.17b.2. This sentence is deleted from the 1576 edition.
- III.17b.3. *Od.* 24. 308. The metaphor, as C. observes, exemplifies the use of the name of the genus for that of the species.
- III.17c.1. "Foreign words" translates *parole foresteriggianti* (ξενολογία). (In the translation (R.2. 59) the word is rendered *nomi stranieri*.)
- III.17c.2. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3. 5, where, however, the object of the verb is ἄρχην (empire) and not δύνάμειν (forces). A slightly different version is to be found in Herodotus 1. 53.
- III.17c.3. *Purg.* 33. 67–69. If your vain thoughts had not hardened your mind (as the water of the Elsa forms a hard crust on the surface of objects submerged in it) and the pleasure they gave had not darkened it (as Pyramus' blood changed the color of the mulberry from white to dark purple).
- III.17c.4. *Poet.* 22. 58a 29–30; *Rhet.* 3.2. The second line is not quoted either in the *Poet.* or the *Rhet.* and is thought to be of a later date. See Bergk-Hiller, *Anth. Lyr. Gr.* 9. 2.
- III.17c.5. "Departure...punctuation" translates *la varia distintione de punti*. I offer this translation with misgivings. I take *punti* to be a collective term for all punctuation marks, though the example from Petrarch has no punctuation.
- III.17c.6. "To be banished, to be driven out" translates *essere bandito et scacciato*. Neither φεύγω nor fugio has either of these meanings.
- III.17c.7. *Ragioni*, etc. See III.17a.5. What C. has said about these four kinds of words may be summarized thus: (1) Of foreign words that differ from the native both in their substance and their accidents he says (p. 4a) that the use of them is forbidden by all masters of the art of writing, tacitly by some, explicitly and categorically by others, and with few exceptions by the rest. (2) Of foreign words that differ from the native only in their accidents he says (pp. 6a–7b) that there is one rule for ancient Greek writers and another for modern Italians. Homer and other writers of high rank could lawfully combine words from the four Greek dialects because all four enjoyed great authority, none more than any of the others, and because the accidents of the four dialects were familiarly known everywhere in Greece. The same liberty cannot be granted to Italian poets; for though the vocabularies of the many Italian dialects are for the most part identical in substance and differ only in their accidents, none of them equals the Tuscan in authority since none can boast a writer as great as any of the great Tuscans. Tuscan is, in fact, the only dialect in which accepted authors have written and continue to write. For this reason Dante is not to be commended for making liberal use in his Tuscan *Comedy* of words from other regions of Italy and from Provence. The French and Spanish languages are also forbidden to Italian writers, for though they both possess equal authority with the Tuscan dialect,

each having been ennobled by great writers, the differences in the accidents of their words and the Italian are greater than those between the four Greek dialects and between the Tuscan dialect and that of every other Italian region. (3) Of words to which the writer has given the meanings of foreign words he first points out (p. 8a) that Quintilian and many others have noted the presence in Latin authors of words and expressions used not in their Latin but in their Greek sense and that Bembo allows that speakers addressing judges or a popular audience may give a new meaning to commonly used words to make their language distinctive and pleasing. Then, observing that Horace and others insist that the source from which the unfamiliar meanings of common words derive must be the Greek language and that Latin words with Greek meanings should be used sparingly, he sets it down as his opinion that the language from which the unfamiliar meaning is derived must be generally known by educated Romans as Latin is in this day by educated Italians. If it is not, the new meaning attached to the native word would not be recognized and the writer would succeed only in displeasing his readers. (4) Of words coined with foreign words as their models he says (pp. 8b-9a) that the practice is not as common as the other just described and that words so formed are not suited to every kind of writing, but would seem to be especially suited to writings on the arts and sciences, where the words must be exact, few, and clear (*proprie, poche, significanti*) and to translations, which may by the use of them be kept as near as possible to their originals.

III.18.1. "And it is to the five fingers, etc." translates "su le quali come in luogo proprio della divisione sogliamo allogare et affidare le parti divise."

III.18.2. This statement is not found in Cicero. In his "In Q. Caecilium Divinatio" 14 (*Orationes Omnes*, ed. N. E. Lemaire [Paris, 1827] l. 210) he asks, "Quid? quum accusationis tuae membra dividere et in digitis suis singulis partes causae constituere?" Lemaire comments: "Ita insequitur Caecilium, ut irrideat etiam Hortensium, ut saepe alias."

III.18.3. The literal meaning of the word is "to count on the five fingers" or to count by fives," and, metaphorically, "to consider." The word was never used in the sense attributed to it by C.

III.18.4. C.'s rendering (R.1.513) of 18. 56a. 25-27 may be translated, "The chorus must assume [the role of] one of the actors, and it must be [a] part of the whole, and it must participate in the action, as [it is made to do] in Sophocles but not in Euripides." In this sentence A. defines the role of the chorus in tragedy, saying that it should be as one of the actors (ἓνα δὲ ὑπολαβεῖν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν) and as a participant in the action (συναγωνίζεσθαι). He understands that in a tragedy the chorus sometimes sings and sometimes speaks, but it is no part of his intention to draw a distinction between the function of the chorus singing and the chorus speaking; whether singing or speaking it should be "one of the actors" and "a part of the whole," as it is in Sophocles but not in Euripides. C. understands him to mean that when the chorus speaks it assumes a function different from the one it performs as a singer. The chorus' songs are merely comments on the actions and have no effect on its movement; its speeches, on the other hand, should be as those of any other single *persona* who has only a speaking role (as they are in Euripides). C. seems to believe that in Euripides the chorus always appears simply as speaker (s'introduce a parlare semplicemente) whereas in Sophocles it both sings and speaks (s'introduce a parlare non semplicemente). Neither Robortello nor Vettori thinks of the chorus as performing a double function. Robortello holds (p. 220) that the utterances of the chorus should show the same concerns as those of the other actors (Oportet...Poetas facere loquentem Chorum de illadem rebus de quibus colloquuntur reliquae personae in fabula),

though he specifies certain functions that are peculiarly its own (Oportet Chorum ita induci loquentem in fabulis ut opituletur laborantibus, consilium det, operam polliceatur suam....) Vettori (p. 188) asserts that the poet should think of the chorus as another actor (sentire de choro ut de uno alioque histrione) whose function it is to further the progress of the plot to the end (ut fabula ad exitum perducatur).

- III.19.1. C. quotes *Aen.* 1. 1a-1d, in which Virgil identifies himself as the author of the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*; *Achilleis* 1. 12-13, in which Statius boasts of his Theban ancestry; *Met.* 15. 871ff., in which Ovid prophesies that his poem will endure for all time and that he will enjoy undying fame; and *Thebaid* 12. 810ff., in which Statius offers reasons for believing that his poem will endure.
- III.19.2. C.'s version of l. 141 (to be completed by "tu te n'andrai"), the first line of the envoy of the canzone at the head of *Convivio* IV, can only mean, "Against my erring ones [thou, my canzone, shalt go]." But the correct reading of the line is "Contra-gli-erranti mia, tu te n'andrai." *Mia*, the feminine possessive, modifies "Contra-gli-erranti," the title of the canzone (*Conv.* 4. 30: "'Against-the-erring' form a single word, which is the title of the canzone...."), the gender of *mia* being feminine because *canzone* (understood) is a feminine noun. The meaning of the line, then, is "Thou, my [canzone] Against-the-erring, shalt go." Dante explains that the peculiar title is modeled on that of Aquinas' book *Against-the-Gentiles*. The directions set forth by C. are not to be found in Dante. Dante points out, it is true, that in the last part of the poem he addresses the poem itself, but not for the reasons attributed to him by C. (*Conv.* 4. 3: "In the third part the speech is addressed to the canzone as a way to add a measure of adornment to what has been said.") In *Conv.* 4. 30 he explains that "every good workman should use the last part of his work to ennoble and embellish the work as much as he is able."
- III.19.3. P.'s canzoni are for the most part as subjective as his sonnets. The concluding words of the sentence ("without...matter") translate "senza lasciare il luogo della fine vuoto." I am not quite sure that my translation conveys the exact meaning of these words.
- III.19.4. A good example of Boccaccio "talking about himself" is the prologue to the stories of the fourth day; another is the *Conclusione* following those of the tenth day. The charge that Boccaccio frequently intrudes himself into his stories is unjustified.
- III.20.1. *Ajax* and *Ixion*. In the translation (R.1.499) C. correctly translates the two titles in the plural: the *Ajaxes* and the *Ixions*. In the commentary (R.1.508) he says that in these lines (55b 34-56a 1) A. "offers examples of the second species [the tragedy of suffering] which represents a reversal from happiness to misery effected without a recognition, the kind suffered by persons who have undergone great physical torment or have suffered death or severe punishment, as did the two Ajaxes, one of whom, the son of Telamon, died by his own hand, and the other, the son of Oileus, was struck with lightning by Minerva to avenge his violation of Cassandra in one of Minerva's temples [Q. Smyrnaeus, *The Fall of Troy* 13. 420ff., 14. 530ff.]...." [Tragedies of this kind were also written about] "Ixion, who for having dared to pay court to Juno, was chained to a wheel which revolves perpetually in Hades...."
- III.20.2. In this passage...a name. C.'s rendering of 56a 2-3 may be translated, "...and the fourth species...like *The Phoricides* and *Prometheus* and the things of the nether world." This last species of tragedies, to which, as he rightly says, A. does not give a name, C. calls "the simple." His reason for giving it that name is to be found in the commentary on this sentence (R.1.510), where he says,

"Aristotle shows what the fourth species of tragedy is by offering the example of two tragedies.... The name of this fourth kind is lacking, and the text has a lacuna where the name should be. But the words on a later page of the *Poetics* (24. 59b 7-9), in which A. names the four kinds of epic poetry, make it clear that the name should be "simple": 'Epic poetry should have the same species as tragedy, for it must be simple or complex or an epic or character or one of suffering.'" See V. 1b. Vettori (p. 178) also calls this species of tragedy "simple," and he also justifies that designation by referring to the sentence on a later page [et sane non sine causa existimari potest ex inferiore loco], where Aristotle asserts that epic poetry is of the same four species as tragedy. Robortello (p. 210), on the other hand, holds that the fourth species includes two kinds of tragedies, those that bring the gods to speak on the stage (as Ocean and other divinities are introduced to speak in the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus and Apollo and other divinities in his *Eumenides*) and those that represent scenes from the nether world (imitatio...earum rerum quae fiunt apud inferos).

- III.20.3. Plots of character. The two examples of such tragedies offered by A. are the *Phthiades* and *Peleus*. C. comments (R.1.509): "Since neither of these tragedies has come down to us, we know so little about them that we cannot confidently affirm why this species of tragedy has been called tragedy of character and what specifically differentiates it from the other species. On the other hand since, as we have said, tragedies of this species have no reversal resulting from a recognition and represent no physical suffering or unrelieved intense misery but only such misery as is more than mild and less than intense, we can quite reasonably imagine that in them the moral traits of its *personae* are more conspicuous than in the *personae* of the tragedies of other species. For in these latter tragedies moral traits are made to subserve the *personae* and to forward the plot, whereas in the former the *personae* seem to be designed to subserve moral traits and to second them, their plots being less than skilfully wrought, so much so that the poet is not without reason believed to have produced a tragedy on this and not on another subject to display his skill as a portrayer of character. The tragedies in question, then, are called tragedies of character because the moral traits of its *personae* are the most conspicuous of its component parts and are considered more skilfully wrought than the plot, and they differ from the tragedies of the other species in that their plots do not tell stories of intense misery. Of this kind must have been the plots in the tragedies of *Peleus*, who after accidentally killing his brother Phocus with a discus wandered in grief over the world until he was absolved of wrongdoing by Acastus (Ovid, *Met.* 11. 407-9). *Peleus*' exile became the subject of a number of tragedies, as Horace attests (*Ars Poet.* 96-98). A story of this kind must have been the subject of the tragedy of *The Phthiades*. This much we can say, but no more."

Notes to Part IV

- IV.1. *Rhet.* 1. 11. The other volume C. has in mind is, as we know from his consideration of the nature of the extant *Poetics* (R.1.11), a *Treatise on the Art of Poetry* (Πράγματα τέχνης ποιητικῆς) listed among A.'s works by Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philos.* 5. 24.
- IV.2. The interlocutor is C. Julius Caesar Strabo Vopiscus, who says (*De. Or.* 2. 54) that books he had seen on that subject exposed their authors to laughter.
- IV.3. All four references in this sentence are to Boccaccio's *Decameron*, as are all others in this chapter in which neither author nor book is named.
- IV.4. *Dec.* 8. 3. They made him believe that they and many other friends en-

- joyed all kinds of sensual pleasures by the favor of two necromancers. These feasts they named, metaphorically, "going a-roving."
- IV.5. The few remaining fragments of the *Margites* are collected in *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homerica* (L.C.L. pp. 536-39). None of the fragments says of Margites that he did not know whether he was older or younger than his mother.
- IV.6. These last three examples are too forced to have any validity.
- IV.7. I omit the next example (from the *Conclusiones*, following the tenth story of the tenth day) because of the untranslatable play on words. The speech constitutes Boccaccio's defense against the charge that he is not prudent (*pesato*) and grave (*grave*). John Payne (Modern Library) translates: "I confess to being a man of weight [*pesato*: "weighed" and "prudent"] and to have been often weighed in my time; wherefore speaking to those ladies who have not weighed [*pesato*] me, I declare that I am not grave [*grave* in the double sense of "heavy" and "grave"]; nay, I am so light that I abide like a nutgall in water."
- IV.8. *Le Cento Novelle Antiche... Dette anche Novellino*, ed. L. di Francia (Turin, 1930), no. 40.
- IV.9. In an earlier episode the Marshall had "won" a lady by paying her husband 500 silver coins of small value gilded to look like the 500 gold florins that had been the agreed price.

Notes to Part V

- V.1a.1. C.'s translation of the first part of 23. 59a 17-21 is far from accurate, but the translation as a whole manages to convey A.'s meaning, which is that epic plots should be constructed like those of tragedy (*bisogna costituire le favole secondo che nelle tragedie [si costituiscono]*), which is to say that they must relate a single action that is both whole and complete (*tutta et perfetta*), having a beginning, middle, and end to the end that it may give its proper pleasure not otherwise (*non altramente*) than is done by a whole animal (*un animale tutto*).
- V.1a.2. "Like histories as commonly written" translates "*simili ad historie usitate*." C., as the ensuing paraphrase shows, erroneously interprets A. to mean that histories of this kind do not make suitable models for epic poetry because they do not relate a single action but all that has happened to one or more persons in a single period of time. But to A. this kind of history is the only possible kind.
- V.1a.3. Robortello (p. 268) interprets A. as giving warning that poetry must not take history as its model (*monetque...esse cavendum ne historiae similis fiat*), for history records the actions of one or more men (*ut Periclis...ut Romanorum*), whereas poetry must not represent more than one action. Robortello acknowledges that history may relate a single action (Sallust relates the history of Catiline's conspiracy), but by and large it relates more than one (*plerumque plures actiones persequitur historia*). The actions recorded by history may be dissimilar and unconnected (*dissimiles, separatae*), but thanks to the affinities which its actions have with one another poetry can reduce them to a single action (*poesis... propter affinitatem actionum ex multis unam constituit*). Vettori (p. 242) interprets A. as showing the contrasts between history and poetry. The proper office of history is not to describe a single event (*non unius tantum facti explanationem facere*) but a single period of time (*verum unius temporis*) and such things as in that time happen to one or many persons or peoples. History on occasion takes note of diverse events that are found to be somehow related to one another (*diversa facta, cum aliquando inter se affecta quodam modo in*

veniantur), but the great mass of its matter consists of things that have been brought together by chance (*casu gestum est*). Poetry, on the other hand, demands that all its constituents be so joined together as to be dependent upon one another (*cuncta enim ita illic copulata esse debent ut alterum ex altero pendeat*).

V.1a.4. Actually A. intends only to illustrate that a historical narrative is not made one by the interdependence of the events it recounts but by the time span it covers. The Battle of Salamis and Gelo's defeat of the Carthaginians occurred at approximately the same time and may therefore be included in the same history. A. does not imply that though themselves unrelated yet together the two battles produced a third event that without them could not have come about.

V.1a.5. There is a reference to the *Heracleid* of Panyasis—"ut refert Panuasis *Heracleas*"—in the scholium to 11. 65–69 of Germanicus' translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*.

V.1a.6. The title of the poem is *Ercole*.

V.1a.7. C.'s rendering of the passage in question (R.2.106) may be translated, "Homer did not undertake to make a poem of the whole war though it had a beginning and an end, for that poem would have been excessively long."

V.1a.8. In the poem (1. 3–4) Statius says that Homer had already sung many of Achilles' glorious deeds (*acta viri multum inclita*).

V.1a.9. Horace writes to Lollius (*Ep.* 1. 2. 1–2) that he has been reading "the writer of the Trojan war" (*Troiani belli scriptorem*).

V.1a.10. There are extensive accounts in *Aen.* 2 (which describes the destruction of Troy) of Sinon and the wooden horse (11ff.), of the death of Priam (506ff.), and the death of Creusa (730ff.). The death of Astyanax is treated by Euripides in *The Trojan Women*. The sacrifice of Polyxena to Achilles' shade is related in Euripides' *Hecuba* (see also Ovid, *Met.* 13. 448ff.), as are the murder of Polydorus by Polymnestor and its consequences. Q. Smyrnaeus (*Fall of Troy* 13. 421–22) says that Cassandra was violated in the Temple of Athena by Ajax son of Oileus, and describes the death of Deiphobus at the hands of Menelaus (13. 354ff.).

V.2a.1. C.'s rendering (R.2.145) of 24. 59b 19–22 may be translated "It should be possible for the beginning and end [of an epic poem] to be seen in one view. To make this possible epic plots must be shorter than those of the old epics [*Cypria*, *Little Iliad*] and as long as the many tragedies [*la moltitudine delle tragedie*; in commentary: *piu and molte tragedie*] performed for one hearing [*poste in una udienza*]." Vettori takes Aristotle to mean (p. 250) that if the spectators of the several tragedies customarily offered in one day remain in the theatre for eight hours, it may be rightly assumed that men will listen to the recitation of an epic poem with pleasure for the same number of hours (*existimari enim posse totidem horis homines cum voluptate audituros epicum carmen recitari*).

V.2a.2. A. says that "tragedy endeavors to keep as far as possible within a single circuit of the sun" (Bywater) (*ὅτῳ μίαν περίοδον ἡλίου*). C. translates the phrase (R.1.146) *un giro del sole* (one revolution of the sun), but in the commentary (R.1.149), where he repeats *un giro del sole*, he adds, *cio è hore dodici* (that is, twelve hours). The reason for this limit is supplied by C. (p. 243. See also p. 89). These pages contain the rationale of the principle of the unity of time; the unity of place is stated but not justified.

V.2a.3. On a later page of this chapter, C. expresses the belief that the two poems must have been divided into books by Homer himself and again (though less than acceptably) by Aristarchus after Homer's division had been disturbed by ignorant scribes. Though Aristarchus was generally regarded in C.'s time and later as responsible for dividing each of the poems into twenty-four books, both

- poems had undergone that process by 250 B. C., some thirty years before Aristarchus was born. See A. Ludwich, *Aristarchs Homerische Textkritik* (Leipzig, 1884-5) 2.220, n. 195.
- V.2a.4. For Plautus see III.5b.2. Scaliger (*Poetice* 6. 3) summarizes in his own words the objections of critics to Terence's *Self-Tormentor* for being in two parts, with a hiatus (the space of one night) between the first and the second: "Nam per initia coenam curant; postea Chremes ait, *lucescit*. Sane igitur abiit nox." But he not only does not join in the condemnation of the piece but actually undertakes to show that the hiatus between the first half of the comedy and the second is defensible (Haec est illorum obiectio, quam sic diluimus), arguing that the comedy was performed at the Ludi Megalenses (Datam actamque fabulam Ludis Megalensibus) and that since these games lasted for more than one day, the first half of the comedy was presented on the evening of the first day and the second the next morning (Dimidium fabulae actum vesperi...alterum dimidium...sub lucem).
- V.2b.1. "Those who dance as they sing" translates "coloro che cantando ballavano." In III.1. C. separates the members of the cast who are not speakers into musicians, singers, and dancers, and they are said to perform their roles separately. No member of the cast is there assumed to sing and dance at the same time. See III.1.4.
- V.2b.2. A. (24. 59b 34-35) describes the heroic metre as στασιμώτατον καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον τῶν μέτρων: "the gravest and the weightiest of metres" (Bywater). C.'s translation (R.2.145) is "fermissimo et gonfiatissimo tra i versi" (the most stable and the most tumid of metres). (Pazzi translates the two adjectives [in Robortello, p. 277] "stabilissimum atque turgidissimum" and Vettori [p. 251] "stabilissimum et tumidissimum".) In the commentary, however, the quality that in the translation is described by the adjective *gonfiatissimo* is designated by the nouns *capacita* (capaciousness) and *gonfiatura o ampiezza* (tumidity or amplitude), and also by the adjectives *piu ampio* (more ample) and *ampiissimo et capacissimo* (most ample and most capacious). In these pages I have translated the three terms by two, capacious and capaciousness.
- V.2b.3. The eleventh chapter of the first book of Hermogenes' *De Formis Orationis* is entitled Περί περιβολῆς καὶ μεσοτήτος, "On the Heightened and Copious Style."
- V.2b.4. In the Pseudo-Plutarch's *De Vita et Poesi Homeri* 14 the author says that Homer sometimes used archaic words, like ἔορ for sword and σάκος for shield.
- V.3a.1. The term similitudinary is first introduced by C. in I.17. See I.17.1.
- V.3a.2. As examples of Virgil's lapses C. quotes *Aen.* 9. 446-49; 10. 501-5; 4. 65-66.
- V.3a.3. C. quotes *Phars.* 1. 8, the first line of Lucan's "sermon."
- V.3b.1. Having said that tragedy should represent the marvelous, A. adds, μᾶλλον ἐνδέχεται ἐν τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ τὸ ἄλογον: "The Epic, however, affords more opening for the improbable..." (Bywater). But C. received a text which reads τὸ ἀνάλογον for τὸ ἄλογον (the emendation, accepted by all modern editors, was made by Vettori, p. 256), and in the commentary (R.2.170) he says that τὸ ἀνάλογον is used adverbially, as if it read ἀναλόγως. He also takes ἐνδέχεται in the sense of "is permissible," so that the translation (R.2.161) for the clause quoted above is, "... ma è piu licito nell' epopea proporzionevolmente..." (but it [the marvelous] is proportionately more permissible in epic poetry." The idea of proportionality introduced here is developed in the next section.
- V.3b.2. Deleted in the 1576 edition.
- V.4a.1. This chapter is devoted to C.'s commentary on A's famous dictum (24.

60a. 26-27]: προαιρεῖσθαι τε δεῖ ἀδύνατα, καὶ εἰκότα μᾶλλον ἢ δυνατὰ καὶ ἀπίθανα, which he translates, "Et si dee eleggere cose impossibili, et verisimili piu tosto, che possibili et incredibili" (Things impossible and probable are to be chosen in preference to the possible and incredible). (The καὶ before both εἰκότα and ἀπίθανα has been deleted by modern editors.) The examples used to illustrate the argument are all C.'s own. That from the Medea story is from Ovid, *Tristia* 3. 9.

V.4a.2. See III.5e.2.

V.4a.3. *Hist. Anim.* 6. 20. It is only some of the females of other than the Laccanian breeds that are said by A. to live to twenty years. A. does not himself justify Homer but only says that there are some critics who do.

V.4a.4. Lucan (in *Phars.* 6. 588ff.) tells that on the eve of the battle of Pharsalos Erichtho conjured up the soul of a dead soldier at the instance of Sextus, Pompey's son, who desired to know the outcome of the battle. C. assumes that Erichtho enlisted Virgil to summon and escort the soldier's soul to earth, and since the battle of Pharsalos was fought in 48 B. C. and Virgil's death did not occur till 19 B. C., he is able, on the basis of his gratuitous assumption, to convict Dante of an anachronism. E. Moore, *Dante Studies*, 1st. Ser. (Oxford, 1896), pp. 234ff., discusses this interpretation of Dante's lines.

V.4a.5. See *Aen.* 9. 83ff.

V.4b.1. These sentences are a paraphrase of 24. 60a 27-29. "It is an error...parts" translates "Vitio è che le favole si costituiscano di parti non ragionevoli," which is a paraphrase of 24. 60a 26-28: δεῖ ... τοὺς τε λόγους μὴ συνίστασθαι ἐκ μερῶν ἀλόγων (Plots should not be composed of improbable parts). C.'s rendering of it (R.2.183) is, "Si dee...non costituire i ragionamenti di parti non ragionevoli." The peculiar rendering of λόγους (*ragionamenti*) and ἀλόγων (*non ragionevoli*) C. explains thus (R.2.192): "Plots are λόγοι; therefore the parts of which they are constituted must not be ἄλογα, for that would be to combine two contraries in a single expression (λόγος and ἄλογος), and we would have 'non-rational reasonings'." In the sentences that follow C. calls the plot not *ragionamento* but *favola*, but he continues to use *non ragionevole* for "improbable." My translation for the phrase is "improbable" throughout.

V.4c.1. No such defense of Homer appears in the commentaries by C.'s predecessors (Robortello, Segni, Maggi, Vettori).

V.4c.2. "To maintain...metaphors" translates "per mantenersi questa soprana gonfiatura riceveva specialmente le lingue et le traslationi." A. asserts that the heroic metre is of all metres στασιμώτατον ("gravest" not "most stable") καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον ("weightiest" not "most capacious"). From these facts he draws the inference that its gravity and weightiness makes it more receptive than other metres to strange words and metaphors. C. says that the heroic metre is hospitable to strange words and metaphors for the purpose of maintaining its capaciousness. The idea of purpose is not present in his translation of the clause (R.2.145): "Laonde riceve massimamente et le lingue, et le traslationi" (Hence it is especially receptive to strange words and metaphors).

V.4c.3. The only sonnet of Molza's in which a shepherd is represented as singing of his love is no. 67 in *Poesie di F. M. Molza* (Milan, 1808). The shepherd's language has the same Petrarchan elegance as the sonnets in which Molza sings of his own love.

V.5.1. Gorgias, "Apologia pro Palamede" 7. Palamedes is represented as saying: "How would we have communicated? Person to person? But each was ignorant of the other's language. Through an interpreter? A third person gains the knowledge of what should be kept secret."

V.5.2. "In any tragedy" translates *nella tragedia*. C. convicts A. of error because

he has misinterpreted him. But in the translation (R.1.246) A.'s phrase (9. 51b 19) ἐν ταῖς τραγωδαῖς ἐνίσαις is correctly rendered "in alcune tragedie" (in some tragedies).

- V.5.3. *Satires* 1. 121: "Aurículas asini Midas rex habet?" Modern editors have rejected this reading for "Aurículas asini quis non habet?" The first reading rests on the authority of the anonymous *Vita Persii*, which says that it had been suppressed by Persius' mentor and editor Cornutus, who feared that Nero might take the gibe to have been aimed at himself. See John Conington, *The Satires of A. Persius Flaccus* (Oxford, 1893).
- V.5.4. Zoilus' criticism of Homer won him the title of "the scourge of Homer" (Suidas, s. v. Ζωῖλος). In Greece and in Rome he became the type of the captious and malicious critic. Momus (Blame), the son of Night (Hesiod, *Theog.* 214), god of mockery and censure.

Notes to Part VI

- VI.1.1. In this chapter what are called ways (*vie*) of imitating in the first sentence are subsequently called objects (*cose*) of imitation.
- VI.1.2. There is no foam on the horse's mouth in Titian's equestrian portrait of Charles V in the Prado Museum in Madrid. The anecdote appears in Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* 35. 36), where it is told of the Greek painter Protogenes, though the animal there is not a horse but a dog.
- VI.1.3. "Manifest" translates *principale* and "hidden" *dependente*. The distinction is between actions that are common knowledge and actions that can only be inferred from their effects. C. himself will soon use *manifestamente* synonymously with *principalmente*.
- VI.1.4. Ovid, *Met.* 3. 572ff.
- VI.1.5. The two passages in square brackets were deleted from the 1576 edition. Dante believed that the political supremacy of Rome was divinely willed (*Conv.* 4. 4; *De Mon.* 2. 4), that the mission of the Roman Empire was to prepare the world for the reception of Christianity by establishing universal peace (*Conv.* 4. 5; *De Mon.* 1. 16), and that the city of Rome was foreordained to be the seat of the Roman pontiff (*Inf.* 2. 22-24). He nowhere expresses an idea resembling the one attributed to him by C.
- VI.1.6. "Ad Joannem Matthaeum Gibertum Episcopum Veronensem" in Hieronymi Fracastori, *Carmina* (Padua, 1739) 1. 117-20. It was not a single fisherman but a number of sailors who because they behaved insolently toward Saturn as they rowed him across Lake Garda were transformed by him into carps (the name of their leader being Carpus).
- VI.1.7. C.'s terms are *naturali* and *accidentali*.
- VI.1.8. *O.F.* 25. 58ff. The thaumaturge was not a fairy but a nymph.
- VI.2.1. A typical pronouncement on this subject is the following in Bernardino Daniello, *Della Poetica* in *Trattati di Poetica e Retorica del Cinquecento* a cura di Bernardo Weinberg (Bari: Laterza, 1970), 1.244: "The writer's subject being not only all human activity but also all divine things, he must of necessity possess if not all learning and the knowledge of all the sciences at least the greater part of both....For without knowledge there is not a subject that can be treated well and correctly."
- VI.2.2. The subject does not come up in the *Ion*.
- VI.2.3. The custom of rewarding poetic achievement with a crown, though not unknown in the Middle Ages (Dante expresses the hope that he may be so rewarded by the city of Florence in *Par.* 25. 1-12), was not effectively revived until

Petrarch was crowned under the sponsorship of King Robert of Naples in Rome on April 8, 1341. Pope Innocent VIII sponsored the crowning of Giovanni Pontano on January 28, 1486.

- VI.2.4. "Canzone on the Virgin," *Canz.* 366. In the introduction to this canzone in his commentary on the *Rime* (Basel, 1562), Pt. 2, pp. 165-6, C. says that the poem had been found in a chest after the poet's death and had never been shown by him to anyone. He deplores its inclusion in the *Canzoniere* and its place of honor as the last poem in the book, pointing out its many defects, and among them the recurrence in the sixth stanza of the rhyme *etta*, which had already been used in the third. C. begins his introduction to the "Triumph of Chastity" (*Rime*, Pt. 3, p. 244) with the words, "In this poem on the triumph of chastity four rhymes are repeated: *ate, ido, inse, ine*." This and other blemishes prove to him that "this triumph received no more of the poet's revision than the others."
- VI.2.5. *Par.* 9. 103-8. The three rhyme words in these lines are *torna, adorna, torna*. The second *torna* rhymes, of course, with *adorna*. The reading in modern editions (including G. Petrocchi's) is *torna*, not *t'orna*.
- VI.2.6. *Par.* 16. 37-39. Some modern editors read *tre* for *trenta*. Petrocchi's reading is *trenta*, which makes *fiate* a dissyllable. In "Giunta" 10 to bk. III of Bembo's *Prose* (Milan, 1810), p. 169, C. says of this tercet, "For *trenta* read *tre*...not only because 'five hundred and fifty and thirty' would be a very unusual way of saying 'five hundred and eighty,' but because *fiate* would then remain a three-syllable word, which it usually is." He also says that the reading *tre* would put the date of Cacciaguida's birth at 1106, "twenty years before Conrad was crowned, and he would consequently have been of age to be created a knight during Conrad's reign."
- VI.2.7. Only three of these notes to bk. II of Bembo's *Prose* remain. A note at the end of the MS. of "Giunta" 11 of bk. I of the *Prose* says that the rest were burned in the fire that destroyed C.'s house in Lyons in 1567.
- VI.2.8. *Inf.* 1. 70. The phrase *sub Iulio* is not condemned as historically questionable by modern editors. Caesar was assassinated when Virgil was barely 26, before he had made a name as poet and (some editors add) before he could be honored by Caesar as he was to be by Augustus.
- VI.2.9. See III.5e.2.
- VI.2.10. "Trionfo d'Amore" I. 1-5. In a note to these lines in his commentary on the *Rime* (pt. 3, p. 179) C. says, "Petrarch here betrays his meager knowledge of celestial signs, for he says that the sun was already in Taurus to indicate that it was the sixth of April.... This error, as I believe, is due to his misunderstanding of Virgil, *Georg.* 1 [217-18]: 'Candidus auratis aperit cum cornibus annum / Taurus....' To Petrarch Virgil's words seem to have meant that it was spring, whereas they designate only a part of that season, from the middle of April on." The sun enters Taurus on April 17.
- VI.2.11. *Canz.* 50. 1-3: "At the hour when the sky swiftly declines toward the west and flies to people that perhaps there await it...." In a note in his commentary on the *Rime* (pt. 1, pp. 104-5) C. says, "The poet says 'perhaps' because the existence of the antipodes was doubted in his day." He then refers the reader to St. Augustine's *City of God* [16.9] and quotes from Virgil's *Georg.* 1. 247-9.
- VI.2.12. See III.6.2.
- VI.2.13. "A similar...handled" translates "Non fece cosi," after which the editor of the 1576 edition adds a clause not in the edition of 1570: "come altra volta ad altro proposito habbiamo detto" (as we said elsewhere apropos of something else). But no comment on this story by Boccaccio is to be found in any of C.'s other writings.

VI.2.14. For comment on this chapter see the next note.

VI.3.1. C. has already considered errors in the art of poetry in the concluding pages of the preceding chapter, which begins as a commentary on 25. 60b 13–15 [R.2.211]: "Correctness in the art of poetry is not the same thing as correctness in the art of politics or any other art" (Non è quella medesima dirittura della poetica et della [arte] cittadina, ne d' un' altra arte et della poetica). This perception of the nature of poetry might have ruled out the imputation to poetry of any faults but those resulting from an imperfect knowledge of poetic principles or the imperfect application of them; and indeed C. understands as clearly as A. himself that an error in the art of politics or any other art cannot reasonably be imputed to the art of poetry and vice versa. But having established the fact that politics and poetry differ both in nature and in function, he cannot refrain from noting (as A. refrains from noting) that the art of poetry like many other arts is subordinate to politics as to an architectonic art (come ad arte principale), an idea he elaborates by asserting that politics makes use of poetry to serve its peculiar ends and that consequently errors in poetry are imputed to governments. It is these assertions that are made to account for the unimpeachable fact that magistrates take care to ban plays and other poems that could corrupt the city's morals and for the hardly verifiable fact that they extend their powers of censorship to poems that fall short of technical correctness (non habbiano quella dirittura dell' arte poetica). Having thus established the lawful dominion of the art of politics over the art of poetry—the *whole* art of poetry, not only its moral substance but its technical proficiency—and having asserted as fact that errors in the art of poetry are imputable to the art of politics, he can go on to say, with some show of logic, that it is "neither unreasonable nor strange" that errors within and without the realm of the arts and sciences should no less than errors in the art of poetry be imputed to the poets, the former errors partaking no less than the latter of the nature of political offenses. The rest of the chapter is devoted to the description of five errors within and without the realm of the arts and sciences and eight in the art of poetry. (It is worthy of note that the reference to the official censorship of morally questionable plays and other poetry is an implicit admission of a possible moral effect of poetry on its public. But the fact of moral censorship is no sooner recognized than we are once again reminded that the proper end of poetry is pleasure. It is also worth noting that having affirmed in a comment on 22. 59a 21 [R.2.112] that A. nowhere assigns to poetry any other end than pleasure, C. adds, "And if he does concede that poetry is not wholly without utility, he does so incidentally (*per accidente*), as when he speaks of the power of tragedy to purge the soul of pity and fear." See p. 150, where C. admits that the purgation of pity and fear has for its effect "health of soul produced by the action of very bitter medicine.") The present section begins with a reference to A.'s distinction between correctness in the art of poetry and "in the other arts" (dell' altre arti), no mention being made of the art of politics and the subordination of poetry to politics, and continues with a discussion of both inherently artistic and adventitious errors without mention of the political coloring of either.

VI.4.1. The sentence in square brackets was deleted from the 1576 edition. The doctrine of transubstantiation was defended against the Reformers and redefined by the Council of Trent. See S. Pallavicino, *Istoria del Concilio di Trento* (Rome, 1833) 2. 643.

VI.4.2. Sun...entering Taurus. See VI.2.10. Another in Statius. *Achilleis* 2. 99–100. Aristotle (*Hist. Anim.* 3. 7) says that the bones of lions have no marrow or so little that they may be said to have none.

- VI.5.1. In *Aen.* 1. 184ff. Virgil tells that Aeneas killed seven deer near the African shore on which he had landed. Servius, *ad loc.*, says that deer were unknown in that locality and attributes the error of fact either to poetic convention (*secundum poeticum morem*) or to the belief that in the heroic age every kind of thing was indigenous everywhere, referring to Virgil, *Ecl.* 4. 39: "Omnis feret omnia tellus." But these words refer to an age yet to come.
- VI.5.2. "Virgil...attributed to Scylla...and again to Pollux." *Ecl.* 6. 74-77. Servius, *ad loc.* says, "Modo Vergilius aut poetarum more miscuit fabulas et nomen pro nomine...." *Georg.* 3. 89-90. Servius, *ad loc.* says, "Fratrem pro fratre posuit poetica licentia."
- VI.5.3. *Par.* 6. 49-51. The speaker is Justinian, who would have known Hannibal's followers only as Carthaginians. W. W. Vernon, in a note on these lines [*Readings on the Par. of Dante* (London, 1909) 1. 189] says, "Dr. Moore writes to me on this passage, 'I believe the explanation to be that as the neighborhood of Carthage at Tunis was occupied by Arabs in Dante's time, and had not yet come under the dominion of the Turks, the word is used anachronistically for Carthaginians.'"
- VI.5.4. Ferraù is called a *marrano* by Argalia in *O.F.* 1. 26. Actually the term had passed into Italy before the expulsion of the Jews (1492) and was used by Pulci in *Morgante Maggiore* (1481) 27. 275.
- VI.5.5. *Canz.* 58. The person addressed is Agapito Colonna, Bishop of Luni.
- VI.5.6. Origen's *Contra Celsum* contains no such reproach. C. may have had in mind the following sentence from 5. 45 (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers* [New York, 1896-99] 4. 563): "If anyone, either in an invocation or in swearing an oath, were to use the expression, 'the God of Abraham,' and 'the God of Isaac,' and 'the God of Jacob,' he would produce certain effects, either owing to the nature of these names or to their power, since even demons are vanquished and become submissive to him who pronounces these names; whereas if we say, 'the god of the chosen father of the echo,' or 'the god of laughter,' and 'the god of him who strikes with the heel,' the mention of the name is attended with no result, as is the case with other names possessed of no power."
- VI.5.7. As Ciceronians both Christophe Longueil (1488-1522) and Jacopo Sadoletto (1477-1547), a cardinal, avoided all words and expressions not in Cicero and therefore sometimes inappropriately used the language of paganism. Longueil (who appears as the ridiculous Nosoponus in Erasmus' *Ciceronianus*) opens an oration before the Roman academicians (*Orationes Duae* [Venice, 1589], p. 9) with the words, "Quod per hosce quadraginta dies a Deo Optimo Maximo precatus sum, Patres Conscripti,..." and Sadoletto (*Carmina Quinque Illustrium Poetarum* [Bergamo, 1753], p. 327) opens a poem to two friends with the lines, "Dii vobis grates veneror palmis coelestia templa, / Quod me...."
- VI.5.8. See A. B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge, 1914-40) 1. 157-63.
- VI.5.9. These are Virgilian phrases, the first of which occurs frequently in the *Aen.* (as in 1. 439, 2. 174, 4. 182), the second only once (3. 39).
- VI.5.10. This sentence is a paraphrase of 25. 60b 36-61a 1, which in C.'s text reads, ἵσως γὰρ οὕτε βέλτιον οὕτω λέγειν, οὐτ' ἄλλ' ἔτυχεν, ὥσπερ Ξενοφάνης, ἄλλ' οὐ φασὶ τάδε. For ἄλλ' οὐ φασὶ τάδε modern texts read ἄλλ' οὖν φασὶ. C.'s "by chance" mistranslates ἄλλ' ἔτυχεν (perhaps). In the commentary (R.2.272) he supplies δεῖ at the beginning of the sentence and translates, "And perhaps (ἵσως) it is not to be said that things are better thus (βέλτιον οὕτω), i.e., that the things represented are as they ought to be (for βέλτιον is the equivalent of οὐκ δεῖ εἶναι), nor is it to be said that those things are true, i.e., as they were or are (for ἀληθὴς is the equivalent of οὐκ ἦν ἢ εἶναι). What is to be said is that they have been represented

as they are by chance (ἀλλ' ἔτυχεν), as Xenophanes used to say, and perhaps it ought not to be said that they are as they are said to be. The words ἀλλ' οὐ φασι τάδε, which come after ἀλλ' ἔτυχεν, belong naturally before the phrase that should come third after οὐτε βέλτιον οὕτω, οὐτ' ἀληθεῖ, since these answers to the objections [that they are as they ought to be, as they were or are, as they are said to be] are repeated before the fourth ["by chance"] is added." This interpretation of the sentence C. then summarizes thus: "Therefore if it cannot be said that things are better represented thus [as they ought to be] or that they are represented as they are or are said to be [οὐ φασι τάδε], it can be said that they are represented as they truly are by chance...; for he who says what has been said does not know that he has said the truth." What A. actually says is simply that if things are not represented as they are or ought to be they may be represented, as Xenophanes used to say, as people thought they were. In other words the poet is seen to have imitated the object "as it is said to be." A. does not, as C. believes, introduce a fourth answer to objections.

VI.5.11. "Spears...stood erect...in the ground" translates "lancie...le quali erano drizzate, et piantate col calzo in un cerchietto di ferro fitto in terra..." Lang, Leaf, and Myers translate: "Their spears were driven into the ground erect on spikes (ἐπὶ σαυρωτήρος) of the butts." A. uses this as an example of the representation of things "as they were." It is not his intention, as C. believes, to introduce a fifth answer to the objections that might be raised against a poet's imitation of his object.

VI.5.12. The sentence in square brackets is deleted from the 1576 edition. The ravages of the Black Death are described in the opening pages of the first tale of the *Decameron*. Boccaccio says that during the plague civil authorities and priests, like the members of other classes, were all dead or stricken, or so bereft of kith and kin that they could perform none of their duties.

VI.5.13. See III.5e.2.

VI.5.14. In his *Variae Lectiones* (Florence, 1553) 13.18 Vettori, commenting on Euripides' *Helen* 375–83, asserts that the two metamorphoses mentioned in the lines, that of Leda into a lioness (this represents a misreading of the lines) and of the Titanian daughter of Merops, who was turned by Artemis into a stag with golden horns, were unknown to the Roman and Italian poets. C. (*Opere Varie Critiche*, pp. 100–101) tells that asked for an explanation of the lines by a Roman youth Vettori replied that "among the Greeks there were many fables and fabulous histories the knowledge of which had never been handed down to the Latins" (a statement not contained in Vettori's text). He also makes Vettori say that it was Callisto who was metamorphosed into a lioness, and adds that Vettori was so pleased with his reply that he included it as a chapter in his *Variae Lectiones*. The Roman youth was not satisfied by Vettori's interpretation of the lines and asked C. for a proper reading of them. C. rejects Vettori's interpretation and offers a different one by altering a letter in each of three words.

VI.6.1. Vettori (p. 292) interprets A. to mean that a poet's imitations (*scripta poetarum*) should be "exemplar eorum, quae homines agere debent in vita"; they should in fact be "ita perfecta, ut superent quae geruntur ab hominibus." The second idea, that they should reveal the perfection of beauty, is not present in Vettori.

VI.6.2. See III.14.15.

VI.6.3 C. has already said (R.2.327) that it is A.'s intention "che noi prendiamo quello, che egli dice per essemplio, et non per compiuto distendimento di tutto quello che si potrebbe dire." A part of this sentence has been incorporated in the second sentence of this chapter. "Contrary to reason" in the first sentence

translates *non ragionevole*. C. translates τὸ ἄλογον (R.2.325) as *non ragionevole* (contrary to reason) o *vogliamo dire sconvenevole* (or, rather, improbable) and defines it as "the term under which are subsumed things about which it cannot reasonably be predicted that they will certainly be done (le quali non è ragione verisimile che si debbano fare) though it may be possible or even easy to do them." Bywater translates it "improbable" throughout.

VI.6.4. "Objections...called 'contradictions' " translates "opposizioni domandate τὰ ὑπεναντία." In C.'s text τὰ ὑπεναντία (which he translates *cose contrarie*) is followed by ὡς εἰρημμένα, which he translates *come dette* and in the commentary (R.2.331) paraphrases "come veramente dette dal poeta...et non presupposte dall'opponente, come se il poeta le avesse dette" (as actually said by the poet...and not imagined by the critic as things said by him). In C.'s sentence the author of the contradiction is understood to be either the poet or one of his characters (...s'oppono al poeta che dica o faccia dire ad alcuna persona cose che paiono tra se contrarie).

VI.6.5. This sentence translates C.'s rendering of 25. 61b, 15-18 (R.2.324). It is quoted to clarify C.'s discussion of it. The last clause mistranslates A.'s text; that mistranslation explains the difference between C.'s first interpretation of it (VI.6.4) and the one in this section. C.'s understanding of the last clause is to be found in the next section (R.2.233).

VI.6.6. Vettori (p. 293) takes A. to mean that the poet will not be found guilty of a contradiction (a culpa abesse intelligitur) if it is proved that he does not contradict himself or the judgment and authority of a wise man (si percipitur secutus iudicium atque auctoritatem hominis prudentis).

VI.6.7. Both of C.'s interpretations of 25. 61b 17-18 are wide of the mark. A. says that before a critic can justly accuse the poet of a contradiction he must ascertain either that the poet has contradicted himself or that something he has said contradicts what a man of sound sense would hold to be true. C.'s translation of the clause (R.2.324) reads, "Laonde et esso [opponente riguarda] o a quelle cose ch' egli stesso dice, o a quella cosa, che un savio presupporrebbe." (Thus [a critic looks for contradictions] in what he himself says or in what a wise man would hold to be true.)

VI.6.8. Ἀλογία is generally interpreted as applying not to the character of Aegeus but to the improbability of his appearing at the precise moment when Medea needs his offer of sanctuary in Athens.

Notes to Part VII

VII.1.1. The reason considered by A. for ranking epic poetry above tragedy (which he will undertake to refute in the next paragraph) is that it is the "less popular" (ἥττον φορτικῇ) type. The normal theatre audience being a popular and therefore an uneducated audience can be assumed to be imperceptive (οὐκ αἰσθημένων: *insensibile*), and performers can bring the meaning of their lines home to it only by interpreting them with the accompaniment of many gestures and other bodily movements (πολλὴν κίνησιν: *gran movimento*). Epic recitations, on the other hand, make small use of gestures, which indicates that they address the more cultivated audiences (θεατὰς ἐπιεικεῖς: *veditori discreti*). The epic, then, is the "less popular" of the two types. C. takes φορτικός (popular) in its second sense of "toilsome" and develops at considerable length an argument which he assumes to be in line with A.'s and is not. It is only after he has finished his consideration of tragedy as the "more toilsome" of the two types that he develops "the second reason" (1b) for ranking epic poetry above tragedy, which is that it addresses the more cultivated audience, the only reason developed by A. C.'s error

was made first by Vettori (p. 296), who translated φορτική *importuna*. Pazzi (in Robortello, p. 313) had translated it "odious" (*invidiosa*). I have on occasion translated it "fatiguing" or "burdensome."

VII.2.1. A. first refutes the argument that tragedy is a popular art because the performance of it requires a great deal of physical movement by asserting that when the movement is excessive the fault is to be imputed not to the art of tragedy but to the actors. He then argues that not all movement should be condemned but only that of the ignoble (ἀλλ' ἡ φαυλῶν). Finally he asserts that performance is not necessary to tragedy and that like epic poetry tragedy can produce its proper effect by being read.

VII.2a.1. This is the meaning of *music* not only here but throughout the rest of this chapter. See above III.1.1. and 4.

VII.2a.2. This sentence, which replaces C.'s paraphrase of it in the commentary, translates C.'s rendering of 62a 6–8 (R.2.351). A. names Sosistratus the rhapsodist and Mnasisheus the singer as performers who make excessive use of gesture. C.'s translation makes both of them rhapsodists, and blames Sosistratus for overusing gestures and Mnasisheus for delivering too many parts of the epic poem in song.

VII.2a.3. "But only that of the wicked" translates *ma quello de rei*: ἀλλ' ἡ φαυλῶν. (Actually, A. says that not all movement is to be condemned, since that would be to condemn all dancing, but only that of the ignoble, adding that first Callipides and now others have been blamed for representing the movements of ignoble women.) In the next sentence C. says that the dance is not a burden to tragedy except when it is made one by lapses in the art; in a later sentence (R.2.354) an error in the art of dancing is said to be committed when the women represented are baseborn or unchaste and not noble and virtuous.

VII.2b.1. "A penetrating and inquiring intellect" translates *lo 'ngegno...aguto et speculativo*. In the clause before this C. has said that the plot "must be imagined" (*imaginata*) by the reader, and in the next sentence he will say that the reader need not "imagine or invent" (*imaginarsi et...trovare*) any part of the epic poem. *Imagining* and *inventing* would seem to be the function of the *penetrating* and *inquiring* intellect. See I.9.4.

VII.3a.1. Aelius Aristides, *Orationes* (*Opera Omnia*, Oxford, 1722) 1. 48–49.

VII.3a.2. "In place of language" translates "in luogo di parole." To make the point that tragedy has nothing of which epic poetry is deprived C. avoids saying, "in addition to language."

VII.3b.1. "For attaining the end of imitation with less length" translates C.'s "per essere il fine della rassomiglianza in minore lunghezza," his rendering (R.2.351) of 26. 62a 28–62b 1.

VII.3c.1. Scaliger (*Poetice* 6. 3) condemns the improbability in Euripides' *Suppliants*, where Theseus leaves Athens with an army to fight a battle in Thebes before a choral ode of less than forty lines and a messenger enters to announce his victory at its end. He has condemned an improbability of the same kind in Plautus' *Captivi* (III. 5b. 3).

VII.3c.2. "Mouse's tail" translates *coda di topo*: μούρπον. But in the commentary (R.2.364) C. says that "in this context μούρπον is to be taken as simply 'little' and 'brief.' " [...è da prendere μούρπον in questo luogo semplicemente per piccolo et per breve]. Butcher and D. W. Lucas accept the reading μούρπον as an adjective modifying μῦθον. Lucas translates it as "mouse-tailed, i.e., tapering off, ending prematurely" and Butcher "truncated." Bywater accepts the alternate reading μείουρον and translates it "curt." Pazzi (in Robortello, p. 319) and Vettori (p. 304) both read μούρον, but it is translated as an adjective, *imminutam*, by Vettori and as a noun, *muris cauda*, by Pazzi.

VII.3c.3. This sentence is an expanded paraphrase of 26. 62b 5-7, which C. translates (R.2.351) "Laonde, se fanno una favola, è di necessita o che, dimostrandosi brieve, appaia una coda di topo, o che, secondando la lunghezza del verso, [appaia] acquidosa." (Hence if they treat a single plot the necessary result will be that it will appear brief and will seem to be a mouse's tail, or that being of a length in keeping with that of the line it [will seem] waterish.)

VII.3d.1. "With less exertion of the poet's genius" translates "con minore fatica d'ingegno." "Tragedy merits the higher rank" translates "la tragedia [è] da reputare poema di maggiore stima." I have changed C.'s "higher esteem" to "higher rank" because in my translation rank has been by far the more conspicuous idea in the discussion of the merits of the two types. A. gives tragedy a higher rank than epic poetry for four reasons (26. 62a 14-62b 7), of which C. makes only one his own: that tragedy gives the greater pleasure. This reason C. does not develop beyond asserting that the performance of a tragedy gives *much* greater pleasure (*diletta...molto piu*) to both the ignorant and the cultivated (*i veditori ignoranti et intendenti*) than the recitation of an epic. To this reason C. adds one of his own, which is that the making of tragedies requires more genius (*piu ingegno*) than the making of epic poetry, a greater genius (*maggior ingegno*), and finally—and conclusively—a more strenuous exertion (*fatica*) of the poet's genius. One of the ideas that run through the whole of the commentary is that one artifact can be demonstrated to be superior to another of the same kind if it can be shown that the production of it made the more strenuous demands upon the artist's abilities. The greatest poem or painting or sculpture is the one in the production of which, other things being equal, the artist has overcome the greatest difficulties. In this paragraph C. affirms, arbitrarily, that the peculiar constituents of epic poetry can be produced (*si mandano ad essecutione*) with less exertion of the poet's genius than those of tragedy, and by invoking the principle he has upheld and applied throughout the commentary he pronounces tragedy the superior poetic type.

Addendum

Page 160. The formulation of the five requirements in square brackets is the translator's. The fifth on the list differs from the fifth in C.'s list on p. 175. But the first four in both are the only ones that are legitimately derivable from A. See III.13.1.



General Index

Action, Actions: or plot, xxii, 58; tragedy the imitation of, xxii, 61; plot is the end of tragedy, 67; a.A., unity consists of a single action of a single person, 87; two actions in tragedy and comedy, 87; principal and subsidiary plots, 87, 89; single action in epic poetry, 89, 222; single actions of single people, 89-90; ways to multiply actions, 91; containing unacceptable episodes, 109; as means of recognition, two kinds of, 126; deeds of a person, 130-31; and suffering, 156-60; occurring simultaneously or successively, 224-26; in history and poetry, 224-26 the beginning, middle, and end of action, 226-30; that cannot be represented exactly on stage, 253-54; unsuitable actions, 260-62; royal, divine, and miraculous actions, 273-76, 295-96. *See also* History, Plot, Recognition

Activity: one of the five things common to all men, 23, 332

Anachronism: and errors, 293-94; and history, 292-95

Analogy: *see* Metaphor

Art: and science and history not appropriate for poetry, 17-20; and native genius, xvi-xvii, 43-44, 335; of greater profit, 43-44; the proper effect of, 144. errors committed in, 278. *See also* Error

Art of poetry: and Castelvetro, xi-xii, xlii-xlv; and history, 3-6; principal concern is plot, 5; as imitation, 6-9;

its media are language, music, song, and dance, 6-10; imitates three kinds of men, 21-22; five kinds of errors in, 279-82. *See also* Imitation, Mode of Imitation, Plot, Poetry

Astronomy: and medicine, 280-81

Barbarism in language, 204-6

Character: 332, 347; three kinds of, a. A., 21-22, 23-24; five things common to all men, 23; one of the qualitative parts of tragedy, 59-61; subordinate to the plot, 64, 67-68, 166-67; concurs with plot in the external end of tragedy, 68; nature of the tragic person, 161-75; its place in tragedy, 166-67; goodness, appropriateness, ordinary virtue, self-consistency, 167-72; compared to painting, where portrayal of subject's ethos is not required, 167, 174; failures in each of the four requirements of tragic characters, 172-73; inadequacy of a perfect model for the poets, 174-75; tragedy of, 212; epic of, 234-35, 355; errors in the poetic arts concerning, 282; thought reveals speaker's, 186-87. *See also* Goodness

Chorus: definition and function in tragedy, 207-9, 353-54

Clearness: clearness and obscurity causes of all the figures of speech, 189-90

Comedy: Castelvetro's views on, xxxii-xxxiii; censuring comedies done

- in prose, 14; comic poet and invention, 96; imposition of names in comedy, 96; pleasure of comedy and the *Odyssey*, 147; imitation of worse than average men, 213-19; and deceptions, 214-17; no chorus in New Comedy, 209; prologues in comedy, 209-10. *See also* Tragedy
- Comic agent: fainthearted, 152
- Complication: and resolution, 134-37
- Consistency: three kinds, remote, proximate, internal, 170-71; consistency and the probable, 173
- Consolation: and pleasure in certain reversals, 165. *See also* Pity and Fear, Pleasure
- Contradictions: the third kind of objections, 302-3
- Deception: four kinds, 214-17
- Delight: *see* Pleasure
- Dialogue: 330; three kinds, 13-15; common faults and faults peculiar to each kind, 13-15; of animals, plants, and inanimate things, 15-16
- Differences: between the six qualitative parts of tragedy, 68-71; between the magnitudes of animals and of plots, 81-82, 228-29; between the length of the plot and the size of an animal, 83-84; between poetry and history, xx, xxv-xxviii, xxxiv-xxxvi, 3-5, 17-20, 24-26, 75, 94-97, 98-100, 102-4, 223-25, 266-69, 356-57; between poetry and painting, 9, 26-27, 46-48, 81-82, 174-75, 272-77, 300-301; between things happening after others or because of them, 116; between the ignorance of persons and the ignorance of deeds, 119-24; between prologues in comedy and tragedy, 209-11; between unity of epic and single animals, 221-23; between epic and tragedy in length, xxxviii-xl, 239-45; between epic and tragedy in language, 245-47; between epic and tragedy, 248-50; between the marvelous in epic and tragedy, 250-55; between epic and tragedy regarding superiority, 306-21. *See also* Epic, History, Painting, Poetry
- Difficulty: ranks of qualitative parts determined by difficulty of producing them, 71-72, 321. *See also* Labor.
- Displeasure: sufferings of the just, 59, 154-55; and the marvelous, 254-55. *See also* Pleasure
- Dithyrambic poetry: a subspecies, 6; resembles tragedy more than epic, 55; species of poetry in which language, dancing, harmony, employed, 28, 54; not listed under serious poetry, 49; clearness without meanness in diction, 197-98
- Dramatic mode: differs from narrative mode, 33-34; differs from similitudinary mode, 34-35, 333
- Elegy: use of names in, 268-69
- Encomiums: lampoons and encomiums, 50-51
- Ending: and resolution, 134-37; unhappy ending suitable for tragedy, 144-47; and comedy, 147; common people prefer ending and pleasure of epic, 147
- Epic Poetry: not written in prose, a. A., 10; uses of heroic metre, 10, 49; mother of tragedy, 49; plots of epic and tragedy based upon magnificent actions of royal personages, 95; advantage over tragedy in narrating things past, 142; same four qualitative parts as tragedy, 220; single plot in epic, 222-23; epic plots and history, xxxiv-xxxv, 223-25, 328, 356; three types of narrative suited to history but to be eschewed by the epic, a. A., 226; four species of plot like tragedy, 233-34; epics of suffering and epics of character, 234-35, 355; four qualitative parts in common with tragedy, 235; differences from tragedy in length of plot and in language, xxxviii-xl, 238-43; magnificence and variety of the epic denied tragedy, a. A., 243; uses single medium of language, 243; divisions in epic, 245; appropriateness of heroic metre, 246-47; full narrative mode, 248; has more ways of introducing the marvelous than does tragedy, 250-55; faults to be avoided, 255-66; nomenclature in epic, 266-71; two reasons A. favors epic poetry over

- tragedy, 306-10, 365-66; these reasons refuted, 310-13; tragedy superior to epic, xxx, 313-21; comparison of plots of epic and tragedy, 315-20; tragedy gives more pleasure and requires more genius, xxx, 321; tragedy the more difficult to produce, 321. *See also* Differences, History, Marvelous, Painting, Tragedy
- Epigram: use of names in, 268-69
- Episode: four distinct senses of, 22; three ways of introducing, 63-64; appropriate episodes, 76-77; four ways by which poets may cast light on obscure things, 78-79, 141-43; invention of episodes, 106-8; irrelevant or superfluous episodes, 108-9; episodes in the epic, 241, 244-45; four kinds of: possible, impossible, credible, incredible, 256-58; episode and utility, 258-59; tolerable episodes, 262-65
- Errors: errors hidden in small figures and paintings evident in the large, 81; errors in history, xlv, 96, 280; faults to be avoided, 255-66; to include improbable episodes, 259; unsuitable in the time of occurrence, 261-63; in poetry compared to errors in other arts, 278-81, 362; in sciences and facts of nature, 281, 362; five kinds of, in poetry, 281-82; the adventitious and those involving the art, 283-86; impossibilities, 286-90; anachronisms, 293-94; which mar the plot, 304-5; the impossible, the improbable, the contradictory, xlv-xlvi, 304-5
- Fact: and Castelvetro, xxiv, 341. *See also* History
- Fiction: and Castelvetro, xxiv, 326, 341. *See also* Poetry
- Figures of Speech: clarity and obscurity, 189-90; twenty-eight kinds, 189-93, 352. *See also* Metaphor
- Fortune: one of the five things common to all men, 23, 332. *See also* Person, Pity and Fear, Reversal
- Genius: 331, 334; as intellect, common to all men, 23; native genius and art, xvi-xvii, 43-44. tragedy requires more genius than epic, 321, 367. *See also* Invention
- God: intervention of, 139, 143; revealing past, present, future, 140-41; God's permissive will, 163-65; inventing the actions of gods, 274-75; representations of divine actions, 295-96
- Goodness: 347; as a part of character, 167-69; three types of: natural, accidental, acquired, 169
- Heroic metre: 330, 358, 359. *See also* Hexameter
- Hexameter: 334; appropriate to epic, a. A., 49, 245-46, 265; stability, capaciousness, amplitude, 246; words producing effect of grandeur, 245, 247; heroic metre humbling itself, 265; use in tragedy, 314-15
- History: and poetry, xx, xxv-xxviii, xxxiv-xxxvi, 3-5, 17-20, 24-26, 75, 94-97, 98-100, 102-4, 223-25, 266-69, 327, 356-57; and arts and sciences not subjects for poetry, 17-20; subjects of, 24-26; and the particular, 92-93; contemplates the true, 94-95; fact and fiction, xxiv, 97-100; and character, 170; different from epic, xxiv, 223; makes use of various unifying principles, 224; and Homer, 228-31; and painting, 276-77; errors in, 280-81; and anachronisms, xlv-xlvi, 292-95. *See also* Errors, Painting, Poetry
- Histrionic art: tragedy made toilsome by, 311; not a burden to tragedy, 312
- Horrible: as containing the marvelous, 110-12; deeds and actions, 118, 157-58
- Horror: recognition of deeds of, 119; intentional and unintentional deeds of, 179-83, 349
- Iambic poetry: iambic pentameter proper for dialogue, 246; used in tragedy instead of hexameter, 314-15
- Ignorance: in two types of recognition, 118-19, 120-22; three types of ignorance, 122-24; least and most commendable, 125
- Imitation: 329, 333, 334; general nature of poetry, 6; three major species, 6-9; in poetry and other arts, xxiv-xxv, 8-9; modes, media, and species of,

- 27-30, 329; differences between natural and poetic imitation, xxiv, 43; poetic imitation and the dispositions of fortune, 43; produces pleasure, but not always, 44-46; active and passive, 54; imitating with language, three species, 53; imitation arouses pity and fear, stronger in tragedy than in epic, 54; different kinds of, a. A., 272-77; true and untrue imitations, 276; wrong objects of imitation, 283-86; other defensible objects of imitation, 290-94; four kinds of imitation, 297-99; epic imitation compared to that of tragedy, 308. *See also* Mode Impossible: as attribute of an episode, 256-59, 359; and verisimilitude, xxxiii; of more than one kind, 287-90. *See also* Possibility, Probability
- Improbable: and verisimilitude, xxiii, 359, 364; three examples of improbabilities made tolerable, 260-62; two plots containing improbable elements, 262-64; contrary to reason, 301-5. *See also* Possibility, Probability
- Incredible: 256-59
- Intellect: one of the five things common to all men, 23, 332
- Invention: is the most difficult part of the poet's art, 50; invention of thought the concern of rhetoric, 184-88; comic poet invents the universal form of his plot and its particulars, 95-96; inventor of actions more a poet than a historian a. A., 104. invention and history, xx, 104-5. *See also* Poetic Theft
- Labor: as determinant of poem's quality, 46, 66-67, 100, 104, 228, 276, 321. *See also* Difficulty, Toilsomeness
- Lampoons: part of comic poetry, 49-50
- Language: language, rhythm, harmony, and melody, 55, 329-30, 336-37; one of six qualitative parts, 58, 60; ranked higher than spectacle, 70; ranks fourth among qualitative parts, 71, 188; language as a medium, 10, 184; language of tragedy, epic and dithyrambic poetry is clear and not mean, 197-98; words of various kinds, 189; clarity of language and poetic diction, 197-99; foreign words, 200-206; errors in the poetic arts concerning language, 278-80. *See also* Figure of Speech, Metaphor, Word
- Laughter: four classes of pleasurable things, 214-19
- Madness. *See* Poetic Frenzy
- Magnitude: as a requisite of tragedy, 80-84; paintings and sculptures of great size, 81-84; plot compared to an animal in terms of, 83
- Marvelous: and fiction and fact, xxiv; causes and increases pity and fear, 110; three classes of, 110-13; unusual actions of irrational animals and insensible objects the most marvelous, 111; epic should be more marvelous than tragedy, a. A., 250-51, 253-54; gives pleasure, 251, 342-43; and Achilles' pursuit of Hector, 253-54; marvelous sometimes produces displeasure, 254-55; increased by vividness, 289-90
- Mechanical contrivances: nature and proper use of, 139-40
- Medley: of prose and verse, 12
- Melody: ranks sixth among qualitative parts, 70-72; does not concern the poet, 72; introduced in tragedy for delight, 71
- Messengers: as bringers of news, 63
- Metaphors: four kinds, 189; and analogies, 193-97, 351
- Metre: metrical language, 10, 329; not sufficient to make the poem, 16-17; conceded to oracles, 20-21. *See also* Hexameter, Iambic
- Miracles: incidents revealed miraculously, 63; and romances, 101; manifest and hidden divine actions, 273-75. *See also* God
- Mode of Imitation: 329; three kinds, narrative, dramatic, and a combination of the two, 6, 27, 29-30, 31-35; three ways of manifesting words and things: narrative, dramatic, and similitudinary, 31-35, 248-50; species of imitation, 28-29; seven manners of representing spoken words, 35; narrative mode, proper to epic, 248-49. *See also* Imitation
- Monsters and the monstrous: delight in,

- 48; and the painter, 272
- Music: 329, 332, 333; as a part of tragic poetry, 59-60, 70-71; music and spectacle in tragedy, not in epic, 315
- Names: proper names, invented and historical, 100-102, 266-72; when a fictitious rather than true one is used, 266-72; anachronisms, 292-95
- Narrative and Narrative Mode: perfect and imperfect, 29; speakers in, 30-31; represents words and things by words only, 31-33; generalized and particularized, xxx, 32-33; order of poetic vs. order of historical narrative, 75; and natural order, 75-79; ways of clarifying obscure past or future things, 78-79
- Narrator: partial and impartial, 32
- Necessary or probable: probable or necessary relationship among parts of unified plot, 91; poetry achieves possibilities by representing the probable or the necessary, 94; reversal resulting from incidents in probable or necessary sequence, 117; necessary or probable make for proper plots and characters, 137
- Ode: elegies, and epigrams, 266
- Oration: six quantitative parts in the art of rhetoric, 62
- Painting: compared to poetry, 9, 26-27, 46-48, 81-82, 167, 174-75, 272-77, 300-301, 328; magnitude, and the epic poet, 83; and character, 174, 348; and virtue, 175; and models, 175, 300; imitation in, 272-73, 276-77
- Particular: narrative mode generalized and particularized, xxx, 32-33; and universal, 93, 94-96; universal, fact and fiction, 97-100; and poetic theft, 106-8. *See also* Poetic Theft
- Passion: a character under the sway of, 38-40; tragedy purges the emotions, 156, 320. *See also* Pity and Fear
- Performers: 336-37; four species, 54-55; speak, dance, sing, play musical instruments, 54-55. *See also* Spectacle
- Person: persons swayed by passion, 40; persons in the solution of difficulties, 137-39; kinds of persons and kinds of plots, 153-55; three types of tragic agents, 156; two causes of action, 157; those who affect us by their actions and those who do so by their sufferings, 158-60; three kinds of tragic persons, 161-65, 347-48; person of saintly life who falls from happiness to misery, 162; wicked person who rises from misery to happiness, 163-65; fall of a wicked person, 165; moral traits of persons: goodness, appropriateness, ordinary virtue, self-consistency, 167-73, 347; three determinants of character, natural, accidental, acquired, 169, 347; seven classes of persons fit to be agents in tragic plot, 175-78; friends inflicting injury, 176-78
- Pity and Fear: use in tragedy, xviii, xxxvi, 55-56, 347, 362; intensified by the marvelous, 110-14; suffering as a cause of, 117-18, 158-61, 181-83; purgation of, 156; aroused by unhappy ending, 144-45; reversals and characters, xxxvi-xxxviii, 148-51, 153-58; and the tragic person, 161-75; fall of a holy man, 162; rise of a wicked man, 163-64; and pleasure, 164-65; fall of a wicked man, 165; five requirements of plot, 175; other circumstances, 176; seven classes of tragic persons, 176-78; four kinds of tragic plots, 179-81; not the necessary end of epic, 236
- Pleasure: and utility, xvii, 326; imitation as the source of, 44-46; poetry and painting give different, 46-48; language made pleasurable by metre a qualitative part of tragedy, 52-54; and the marvelous, xxviii-xxix, 113, 254-55; in tragedy, comedy and epic, xxii, 147; four kinds, a. A., 148; and spectacle, 148-51; to match three kinds of incidents, 164-65; happiness and misery, 151-52; emotional effects of simple and complex plots, 153-55; in comedy, 213-19; in the contemplation of an animal, 221-23; in epic and tragedy, 315-16; direct and indirect, 148, 164-65, 320-21
- Plot: plot the end of tragedy, 64-68; plot the beginning and soul of tragedy, 68; plot and other qualitative parts,

- xxx-xxxii, 69-70; eight requirements of plot, 72-118; plot as a whole, with beginning, middle, and end, 73-77; what is or is not essential to the whole, examples, 79-80; proper magnitude of plot in epic and tragedy, 80-87; length of plot is to memory as size of animal is to the eye, 83-85; unity of plot and action, a. A., 87-88; plot the single action of a single person, xl, 88-90, 339-40; possibility a requirement of the plot, 92-100; tragic or epic plots taken from history are more difficult to construct than invented ones, 102-104; four classes of plot in tragedy, 114; uniform or diversified, 114; simple or compound, 114, 329, 343, 346; self-sufficient or dependent, 114; volitional or coercive, 114; complex plot has reversal or recognition or both, 116; plot must represent suffering, 117-18; and recognition, 118-33; and solution of difficulties, 137-44; and kinds of characters, 153; plot and complications, eight kinds, 153-55; poets of A.'s day found their plots in the histories of a few families, 160-61; five requirements, summation, 175; three other circumstances that increase pity and fear, 175-78; and deeds of horror, 178-83; single plot and the epic, 222-23; and analogy to animals, 222-23, 228-29; plot and history, 223-24; four species of plot in epic as in tragedy, 233-35; length of epic plot, 228-30, 239; plots not be made out of improbable parts, 259; improbabilities made tolerable by being excluded from the plot or spectacle, 260; improbable made tolerable in plot, 262-66; plot of tragedy shorter than of epic, 315-16; more unified plot in tragedy than in epic poetry, 316-20. *See also* Character, Ending, Episode, History, Horrible, Person, Possibility, Recognition, Solution, Suffering, Universal
- Poet: not just a versifier, 16; loses the name of poet if he errs in his subject, 18-20; ought to possess the idea of the best and most delightful story, 27; vainglory of poets, 37-38; a. A., a poet best represents a passion by feeling it, 40-41; two kinds of poets, 41; native genius and art, xvi, 43-44, 46-51; austere and jocund poets, 48-51; narrative poets: praise themselves or censure others at the beginning or ending of their works, 210-11; tragic poet: cannot speak his own thoughts, 187; epic poet: sometimes speaks of himself, 187. *See also* Invention, Imitation, Poetic Theft
- Poetic Frenzy, or Madness: Castelvetro's views on, xv, 334; a fancy rooted in the opinions of the vulgar, 37-38, 90-91
- Poetic Theft: examples of, 98-100, 104-8; poems that appropriate plots or complications or resolutions of other poems, 135-36
- Poetry: similarities to and differences from history, xx, xxv-xxviii, xxxiv-xxxvi, 3-5, 14-20, 24-26, 94-99, 102-4, 223-25, 266-69, 356-57; recital of human actions whose distinguishing mark is verisimilitude, 3; three species of, 6; different subspecies, 6-7; and painting, 9, 26-27, 46-48, 81-82, 174-75, 272-77, 300-301; history, arts, and sciences not proper subjects for poetry, xx-xxi, 17-20; produced for the pleasure of the common people, xxvii-xix, xxi, 20, 326, 362; human actions its subject, 24; origin of poetry, a. A., 36; poetry not the production of madness, 37, 40; pleasure of poetry and of painting, 46-48; two kinds of poets: austere and jocund, 48-51; subjects of poetry and history, 100-104; has a different end than politics, 278. *See also* Art, History, Painting, Pleasure
- Poetry, art of: *see* Art of Poetry
- Possibility: in episodes: possible, impossible, credible, incredible, 256-59, 359; definition of, 256; four combinations, two commendable, two not, 256-59; a third pair, utility and disutility, 257-58; the three pairs produce eight groups of combinations, 258; improbable things, xliii-xlvi, 259-62, 359; when improbable things

- can be tolerated, 262-65; four kinds of impossible things and when they can be tolerated, 286-90
- Probability: and verisimilitude, xlii-xlviii, 329; two kinds, 113-14. *See also* Improbable
- Prologue: Roman prologues, 99; three kinds, 209-11; in comedy, 209; in tragedy, 211; one kind necessary to the plot, 211
- Prose: mixed with verse, 12; dialogues in prose, 13-14; is the proper vehicle of history, 97
- Purgation: tragedy purges the emotions, 156. *See also* Suffering, Pity and Fear
- Qualitative Parts: six in tragedy, a. A., 60-62; the relative importance of each, 64-72; four in epic, 315; tragedy has more qualitative parts than epic, 314-20
- Quantitative Parts: in tragedy, a. A., 62; in tragedy and in rhetoric, 62; two additional quantitative parts, complication and resolution, 134; tragedy quantitatively superior to epic, 314-15
- Rank: 332
- Recognition: five kinds of recognition, 118-22; best when it occurs at the same time as reversal, 121-22; recognition of unknown people or deeds, 123-24; recognition of people or unknown deeds following three kinds of ignorance, 123-24; four aspects of the means of recognition, 126; three means of recognition (marks, actions, words), 126-33; artistic and non-artistic proofs of recognition, 127-28; tokens and marks of two kinds, 128-30; recognitions effected by words and actions, 129-30; two ways of proving that a deed has been done, 130-31; two kinds of proof by which people are recognized, 130-31; recognition by true or false reasoning, 132-33
- Representative arts: *See* Histrionic
- Resolution: complication and resolution, 134-37; must occur out of necessity or verisimilitude, 137; escapes and solutions, 137-39. *See also* Solution
- Reversal: end toward which tragedy tends, 64; and recognition, 66, 116; and the marvelous, 112-13; in various kinds of plots, xxxvi-xxxviii, 114-15, 346; definition of, 117. two examples of, 117. *See also* Pity and Fear, Tragedy
- Rhetoric: a means of effecting a recognition, 127-28; its concern the invention of thought, 184-85; of three kinds, 186; differs from poetry, xlv, 187; performs three functions, 187-88; thought as a qualitative part of tragedy, 188
- Riddles: two kinds, 201-4
- Science: *See* Art
- Sculpture: and painting, 9; magnitude in, 81-83
- Similitudinary Mode: *See* Dramatic Mode
- Solution: of difficulties, 137-44; four kinds of, 138-39; unsatisfactory, 139-41, 143-44; and divine intervention, 140-41, 143
- Spectacle: language ranked higher than, 70; ranks fifth among the qualitative parts of tragedy, 71; as a source of tragic pleasure, 148-50, 346; and music proper to tragedy, not epic, 311-15; improbabilities made tolerable by forming no part of the spectacle, 260-62
- Stage: and spectacle, 71-72, 148-49; limitations of the marvelous in tragedy, 250-54; situations on and off stage, 261-62; tragedy made more toilsome by, 311
- Suffering: requirement of plot and cause of pity and fear, xxxvii, 117-18, 160-61, 175-83; physical and mental, 158; some sufferings do not arouse pity and fear, 159-60; intended rather than inflicted suffering, 181-83; epics of suffering, 234-38. *See also* Pity and Fear
- Supernatural agents: causes of suffering, 160-61; bringers of information, 78-79

- Thought: definition of, 183; one of the qualitative parts, 58, 69-70, 184; ranks third among qualitative parts of tragedy, 71, 188; invention of thought the concern of rhetoric, 184-85; thought reveals character, 186; tragic and comic poets' own thoughts, 187; errors in, 282
- Toilsomeness: of tragedy and comedy compared, 306-09, 311-12. *See also* Difficulty, Labor
- Tragedy: definition of, 52-58, 338; qualitative parts of, xxx-xxxii, 58-60, 338; quantitative parts of, 61-63; episodes of, 62-63; plot, not character, the end of, a. A., 64-67; plot and character sometimes of equal potency, 68; tragedy must be a whole, 73-80; plot must have magnitude, 80-84; length of dramatic plots not concern of tragedy, a. A., 85-87; plot must have unity, xxxviii-xlii, 88-90, 153-56, 328; action is magnificent actions of royal personages, 95, 328; all tragic and epic plots should be based on historical events, 95, 103; names in tragedy, 100-102, 106; old and new tragedies, 106-8; must be marvelous, 110-13; tragic reversals, xxxvi-xxxviii, 114-17, 346; must represent suffering, 117-18, 158-61; tragic recognitions, 118-26, 344-45, 355; complication and resolution as quantitative parts, 134-37, 345-46; resolution as a necessary or probable consequence, 137-44; unhappy ending suitable for, a. A., 144-47, 345; total effect of, 148-49, 327; and comedy have different kinds of happiness or misery, 151-52; actions and sufferings of tragic persons, 156-58; fall of a holy man, xxxvii, 161-64; fall of a wicked man, 165, 347; rise of a wicked man, xxxvii, 164-65; tragic character, 161-67; four species of, 212, 355; how resembles epic, 220-33; differences between epic and tragedy, xxxviii, 238-55, 306-21; seen and heard in contrast to epic poetry, 306; imitates with similar words, 308; epic requires cultivated audience, a. A., 309-10; arguments for superiority of epic to tragedy refuted, 310-13; quantitatively and qualitatively superior, 314-21, 367. *See also* Character, Differences, Epic, Episode, Marvelous, Names, Person, Pity and Fear, Plot, Poetic Theft, Qualitative Parts, Quantitative Parts, Recognition, Resolution, Reversal, Solution, Spectacle, Suffering
- Tragic agents: royal personages, 151; three types: those who act, those who suffer, those who act and suffer, 156-60
- Unity: as an attribute of tragedy, 72; as a requirement of plot, xxxix-xl, 87-88, 328. *See also* Episode
- Universal: second term A. uses for the possible, 93; four applications of, 93-94; comic poet invents universal form of his plot, 95-96; what may happen to anyone, 98; fact and fiction, 97-100; and poetic theft, 106-8
- Verisimilitude: and Castelvetro, xxv, xlii-xlviii, 329. *See also* Probability
- Wicked: the rise of the wicked, xxxvii, 163-64; wickedness and goodness, 168-69
- Will: one of the five things common to all men, 23, 332
- Word: 350-53; kinds of words a. A., 189; current and strange, 189, 199-201, 350, 352; stable and metaphorical, 189; old and coined, 189; unaltered and altered, 189; lengthened, contracted, and modified, 189, 206; ambiguous, 190; highest excellence of diction is clearness without meanness, 198-200; vulgarisms, barbarisms, riddles, 201-5; artificial foreign languages, 205

Index of Names

Authors, Painters, and Philosophers

- Aeschylus: xix, 337, 343, 355; and matricide, 42
- *Agamemnon*: action in, 240
 - *Choephoroe*: and recognition, 131, 136; action in, 240
 - *Eumenides*: spectacle in, 149; action in, 240
 - *Persians*: no recognition, 212
 - *Prometheus Bound*: as uniform plot, 114, 346; spectacle in, 149; punishment, 177; names in, 268
 - *The Seven Against Thebes*: 89, 343
- Aesop: and dialogues, 15; animals speaking in, 30
- Agathon: xxix, 100-2, 103, 114, 301, 343
- Agricola, Rodolphus: 75, 329, 414
- Alberti, Leon Battista: 47, 67, 333, 335, 338, 348
- Alexamenus of Teos: 11, 330
- Alighieri, Dante: xix-xx, xxi, xxiii, xxvii, 325, 327, 336, 352, 354, 359, 360, 361, 363; ranked above Petrarch, 82; commentary to *Contra gli erranti miei*, 210-11
- *Convivio*: 354; more than just inspirations of love (*Conv.* 1.1.10), 39-40; offends against consistency (*Conv.* 4.28), 171
 - *Divine Comedy*: 352; introduces arts and sciences, 20; reply to Bonagiunta (*Purg.* 24.49ff.), 38; possible actions against the course of nature (*Inf.* 25.97ff.), 93; Paolo and Francesca, 108, 342; Statius' recognition of Virgil (*Purg.* 21.94ff.), 125; recognition (*Inf.* 25.43), 126; offends against consistency (*Inf.* 27; 34.64; *Par.* 6.73), xlv, 171; mentions his own name (*Purg.* 30.55ff.), 187; analogies and metaphors in, 191, 195; riddles in, 203; Virgil's first journey to Giudecca, 257-59; Roman Empire and the Pope, 274, 360; rhymes, 280; errors in, 280; seasons and hours, how designated, 281; Roman Eagle (*Par.* 6.49-51), 291-92, 293; Cacus' death (*Inf.* 25.25ff.), 292; and Livy (*Inf.* 28.7-13), 296; appropriate expressions (*Inf.* 16.124-27), 297
- Antipater of Sidon: 43, 334
- Apollodorus: 158, 159
- Apuleius: xxiii
- *Golden Ass*; *Metamorphoses*: 12, 105
 - *Apologia*: 270
- Aratus: xx, 18, 19, 331
- Archias, Licinius: 43, 334
- Ariosto, Lodovico: xxiii, 325, 363; took stories from Ovid, Statius, Marullo, 105, 341; inappropriately fashioned episodes, 110; theft in, 292
- *Orlando Furioso*: and Boiardo, 74, 101; contains a number of actions of a number of people, 89; and Medoro and Angelica, 115; errors in, xlv, 250, 275, 279, 281, 293
- Aristarchus: 241, 244, 357-58
- Aristides: 196, 314, 366
- Aristophanes: poets as teachers, xvii; prologues of the third kind, 211; names in *Plutus*, 267
- Aristotle: 324-28, 329-53

- *History of Animals*: 25, 257, 281, 332, 359, 362
- *Metaphysics*: 162
- *On the Poets*: 11
- *Poetics*: and the art of history, xxxiv, 3–5; subject and method of, 3, 4, 5, 6–7, 9, 49; treats only the species of poetry performed in public for the delight of the people, xxi, 7–8, 49, 52; not finished and polished, xiii, 8, 22, 56, 199, 226; Castelvetro's clarifications of A., xiii–xlviii, 6, 10, 18–20, 28–29, 31, 39, 62, 68, 75–78, 88, 93–94, 98, 107, 114, 118, 160–61, 162, 168, 176–78, 179, 183–88, 190–97, 206, 214–17, 223, 233–34, 243, 246, 256, 273–76, 283–84, 294, 302–3, 305, 309, 310, 354–55, 355, 356, 367; errors, contradictions, imperfections, omissions in A's treatment of poetic matters, xv, xvii, xxiv, xxxvii–xxxviii, xliv, 8, 9, 17, 18, 21–22, 24, 27–29, 41, 42, 44–45, 51, 66–67, 68, 69, 73, 74, 84, 85, 89–90, 97, 101, 103, 114, 116, 121, 136–37, 140, 154–56, 162–63, 164–65, 172, 174, 181–82, 183, 195–96, 200–2, 212, 223, 225–26, 257, 266, 267, 272, 273, 285, 307–8, 309, 312, 313, 314, 316, 317–18, 319, 321, 367; errors in some interpretations of the *Poetics*, 11, 167, 184, 224, 239–40; A's refutations, 11, 22, 36, 37, 55–56, 85, 87, 147, 156–57, 206, 278, 310–13, 314–15; does not treat comedy exhaustively, 49; intentions of, 49, 52, 56; plot, xl, 71, 234; complication and resolution, 135; discussion of tragedy valid for epic poetry, 143, 220, 251; conclusions on character, 166–67; silent on various functions of thought, 183; no mention of ambiguous word combinations, 190; riddles, barbarisms, neologisms, 201, 203, 204; never read by Aulus Gellius, 204; theories advanced earlier, 221; not a complete art of poetry, 226; and Achilles, 227, 254; qualitative parts epic and tragedy, 238; solutions to certain problems, 254; impossibilities that may be invented, 288
- *Rhetoric*: xliv, xlviii, 67, 114, 352; artistic and non-artistic proofs, 127; invention of thought, 185; thought and character, 186; foreign words, 199; names, 203; ludicrous, 213. *See also* Castelvetro
- Athenaeus: 11, 330
- Augustine, St.: 333, 361
- *City of God*: 100, 281
- Ausonius: 339
- Averroes: xiii, 337
- Bembo, Pietro: 14, 280, 353, 361
- Biblical references: Gen. 19.30: Lot, 112; Gen. 38.13ff.: Judah and Tamar, 129; Gen. 38.27: 344; Gen. 22: 10–12: Abraham, 179; Num. 2.28: Balaam's ass, 15; Judges 11:29: Jephthah, 111–12, 156, 336; 1 Sam. 17:32ff.: David and Goliath, 113; 2 Sam. 13.1ff.: Tamar, 158; Eccl. 7:2: the saying of the Preacher, 151; Dan. 3:49ff.: Nebuchadnezzar, 179; Luke 23: 31: and fear of misfortune, 162; John 11:47–52: Caiaphas, 297
- Boccaccio, Giovanni: xxiii, xxv, xlvii, 327, 336, 354, 355, 361, 364; weakens reader's belief, 99; talks about himself, 211; and the *ottava rima*, 247
- *Decameron*: xxxiii, 12, 63, 96, 299; story of Giachetto and Giannetta (*Dec.* 2.8), 105, 108, 219, 342; took for *Dec.* stories from Cavalcanti, Petrarch, Apuleius, 105; story of Violante and Teodoro (*Dec.* 5.7), 115, 139; story of Donna Isabella (*Dec.* 7.6), 116, 138; story of Cimone (*Dec.* 5.1), 116–17; husbands of adulterous wives in, 120; ignorance of deeds and persons in (*Dec.* 10.9, 3.9, 3.7, 10.8, 3.6, 2.6, 5.7, 10.4), 120–21, 122–25; story of the abbot and Alessandro (*Dec.* 2.3), 124; recognitions in (*Dec.* 2.1, 5.7), 126, 129; tokens and rings (*Dec.* 3.7, 3.9, 10.9), 128; names in, 136; story of Messer Torello (*Dec.* 10.9), xliii, xlv, 136–37, 143, 258, 265; story of Sismonda (*Dec.* 7.8), 138; story of Tofano's wife (*Dec.* 7.4), 138; story of Giovanni di Procida and Restituta (*Dec.* 5.6), 138–39; prophecies (*Dec.* 3.8, 10.1), 141–42; revelations (*Dec.* 4.5, 10.9), 143; inappropriateness of character (*Dec.* 4.1,

- 7.5), 169-70, 170; Mithridanes and Nathan (*Dec.* 10.3), 179; Ghismonda (*Dec.* 4.1), 170, 180, 266; seemliness in, 192; strange and altered words (*Dec.* 8.2), 201; obscurity (*Dec.* 3.8), 202; ignorance and laughter (*Dec.* 8.3, 9.3, 9.5, 3.8, 4.2, 8.7), 214-15; deceptions, deliriums, dreams (*Dec.* 4.1, 4.2, 5.4, 5.10, 8.4, 9.6, 7.8, 7.4, 7.9), 215, 217; other causes of laughter (*Dec.* 2.9, 2.10, 6.3, 8.9), 216; wickedness and deformity (*Dec.* 1.8, 6.6), 218; carnal pleasure (*Dec.* 9.3, 2.8), 218-19; recognizes errors in speakers (*Dec.* 10.9), 250; recognizes two kinds of pleasures (*Dec.* 9.6), 255; names in, 267, 269, 270; errors in (*Dec.* 1.10), 279; story of provost of Fiesole (*Dec.* 8.4), 282; thefts in, 292; story of Alfonso and the Florentine knight (*Dec.* 10.1), 298; omits last rites for the dying, 299
- *Filopono*: 96; reversal in, 115
- Boethius: 12
- Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato*: 74, 101
- Buchanan, George: 171
- Buonarroti, Michelangelo: 33, 81, 103-4, 328
- Capella, Martianus: *De Nuptiis Philologiae*: 12
- Cáro, Annibal: 190-91
- Castelvetro, Lodovico: xi-xii, xiii-xlvi, 324-28, 329-67; his view of the *Poetics* as unfinished, xiii; his purpose, xiii-xiv; and poetic madness, xv; and native genius and art, xvi-xvii; and the end of poetry as pleasure, xvii-xix, xxi, 362; his rejection of Horace, xviii; utility, xix; and the role of history in poetry, xx, xxv-xxviii, xxxiv-xxxvi; and the arts and sciences in poetry, xx-xxi; and imitation and poetic theft, xxiii-xxiv; and the marvelous, xxiv, xxviii-xix; and verisimilitude, xxv-xxvi, xxix, xlii-xliv, xlv-xlviii; and the qualitative parts of poetry, xxx-xxxiv; and particularized and generalized narratives, xxx; tragedy ranks higher than epic, xxx; comedy, xxxii-xxxiii; and spectacle, xxxiii-xxxiv; and the length of epic and tragedy, xxxv, xxxviii-xl; and the end of tragedy, xxxvi; and pity and fear, xxxvi, 362; and reversals, xxxvi-xxxviii; and unity of plot, xl; and the fantastic, xlii-xliii; and errors in poetry, xlv, 362; reply to Annibal Caro, 190-91
- Translations from Greek by C., 324, 330, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 339, 342, 343, 344, 345, 348, 350, 356, 357, 358, 359, 363-64, 365
- *Giunta*: 280
- *Essaminationi delle cose scritte* 190-91
- *Essaminatione sopra la Ritorica* xlv-xlvii, 350
- *Ragioni* 206, 351
- *See also* Aristotle: *Poetics*: Castelvetro's clarifications, dubious Greek, Errors
- *See* General Index under: Art, Comedy, Epic Poetry, Errors, Genius, History, Imitation, Marvelous, Mode of Imitation, Particular, Pity and Fear, Plot, Poetic Madness, Poetic Theft, Poetry, Probability, Qualitative Parts, Quantitative Parts, Reversal, Spectacle, Tragedy, Universal
- Catullus: 345; speech for a door, 31, 333; Peleus and Thetis, 109; quoted (68.41-46), 142; *ploxenum*, 204; names in, 269, 271
- Chrysippus: xvii
- Cicero, M. Tullius: xviii, xlv, xlviii, 327, 334, 338-39, 349, 353, 363, and medleys, 12; dialogues, 13, 14; *Partitiones Oratoriae*: 14; language of Plato, 21; introducing speakers (*De Amicitia*), 29; narrative and dramatic modes in *De Amicitia*, 35; and orators (*De Or.* 2.45ff.), 39; and extemporaneous oratory (*De Or.* 1.33ff.), 42; and public personages, 83; speech suited to character (*De Or.* 2.16.69), 185; *mastruca*, 205; and the number five, 208; and A.'s theory of the ludicrous, 213; paintings by Zeuxis (*De Inv.* 2.1-3), 223, 300-301; names in, 270
- Cintio, Giambattista Giraldis: 325. *See* Giraldis
- Cornelius Nepos: 89

Crantor: xvii

Daniello, Bernardino: xvii, xviii, 327

Demosthenes: 99

Diodorus Siculus: 157

Diomedes: 332

Dionysius: painted men as they are, 26

Dionysius of Halicarnassus: 347; Brutus' actions (*Ant. Rom.* 5.8), 180

Donatus: 340

Empedocles: 16; and natural philosophy, 17–18, 19; not numbered among poets, 19

Erasmus: 338, 363

Euclid: censures Homer, 207

Euripides: xxxix, 343, 347, 353, 364, 366; and matricide, 42; condemned, 145, 266, 305; endings of, 145–46; and inappropriateness, 170; offends against consistency in *Orestes* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*, 171, 172–73; praised by Quintilian, 185, 186; chorus in, 209; prologues of the second kind, 211; defers to history or tradition, 294–95; length of plays, 317; names in, 270

– *Electra*: complications and resolutions, 136, 357

– *Hecuba*: 268, 357

– *Hercules Furens*: xl, 88, 114–15, 177

– *Hippolytus*: 240

– *Iphigenia in Aulis*: complications and resolutions, 136

– *Iphigenia in Tauris*: xxix, 342; recognition in, 119, 124–26, 181, 182, 234; complications and resolutions, 136; unintentional deeds of horror, 179, 182; threatened and impending suffering, 181

– *Medea*: 139–40, 258–59, 345; intentional deeds of horror, 179; folly of Aegeus in, 305

– *Orestes*: xlvi, 171; wickedness of Menelaus in, 172, 304–5, 348; synopsis of, 172–73; impossibilities in, 288; transformed Menelaus' character, 295

– *Trojan Women*: 282

Faerno, Gabriello: *Centum Fabulae*: 16

Fracastoro, Girolamo: xx, xxv, 18, 19, 96, 274, 331, 360

Gellius, Aulus: *Attic Nights* (5.20), 204; (10.16.3), 293

Germanicus: 226

George of Trebizond: 4, 329

Giotto: 39, 174

Giraldi, Giovanni Battista: 210, 226. *See* Cintio

Gorgias: 359

Hermogenes: *De Formis*: 184, 358; heightened and copious style: 247

– *Progymnasmata*: 281

Herodotus: 340; a history work, 96, 104; Adrastus (Herodotus 1.43), 158, 159; Pythia (Herodotus 1.91), 202

Hesiod: xx, xxi, 15, 41, 360

– *Works and Days*: 19, 21, 41

Homer: 338, 339, 340, 352, 357, 358, 359, 360; and Horace, xvii; poetic subject and heroic metre, 16; does not introduce arts and sciences, 20; and narrative mode, 27, 29; austere and jocund poetry, 50; intention of, 67; commended, xxx, xliii, 75, 88, 90–91, 226, 232, 237, 238, 250, 263, 321, 331, 334; and the *Margites*, xxxiii, 49–50, 213, 215, 356; ranked above Virgil, xxx, xxxv, 82; and Sophocles, 143–44; seldom passes judgment, 167, 187; speakers in, 167, 248; unjustly censured, 206; first poet to use four species of epic poetry, 237; handles four qualitative parts, 238; diction of, 247; is an imitator, 249; indicating seasons and hours, 281

– *Iliad*: xliii, 328; as an example of narrative and dramatic modes, 31; and *Odyssey* particularized narrative, xxx, xlvii, 33; *Iliad* 1.117:40; filled with episodes, 62; characters in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, xxxi, 67; has proper ending, 74; order and subject in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, 75–78, 91; and Pandarus' bow (*Il.* 4.105ff.), 82; and arming of Achilles (*Il.* 18.468ff.), 82; about a whole people, 89; unity of plot, xxx, 90, 221–22, 226–30, 232–33, 237, 317, 318–20; *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and poetic theft, 106; appearance of Minerva (*Il.* 2.142ff.), 139–40, 141; the tower (*Il.* 3.141ff.), xxvi–xxvii, 144, 231, 262, 268; Ulysses in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*,

- 171; Greek wording concerning Dolon (Il. 10.316), 190; the catalogue of ships, 230-31, 267; death of Protesilaus (Il. 2.695ff.), abandonment of Philoctetes (Il. 2.71ff.), 231; duels between Hector and Ajax (5.297ff.), Menelaus and Paris (3.340ff.), Diomedes and Aeneas (5.297ff.), Hector and Patroclus (16.712ff.), Hector and Achilles (22.1ff.), the encounter of Glaucus and Diomedes (6.119ff.), 232; Sinon, Priam, Deiphobus, Cassandra, Polyxena, Astyanax, Polydorus, Creusa, 232; suffering in, 236, 237-38; reversals and recognitions in, 237; divided into twenty-four books, 241, 244; role of the troops (Il. 2.271ff.), 250; the pursuit of Hector (Il. 22.131ff.), 252-54, 286-87, 288, 289-90; length of, 315, 316; Diomedes' followers (Il. 10.152-53), 298-99
- *Odyssey*: xxviii, xxix, 328, 342, 344; unity of, 87, 88, 90-91, 227-28, 237, 241, 320; ignorance in (*Od.* 19.386), 125; recognitions in (*Od.* 8.521ff., 21.207), 126, 129, 212, 236; double plot in, 146, 346; pleasure proper to comedy rather than tragedy, 147; sentiments unworthy of Ulysses (*Od.* 5.297ff.), 169; metaphors in, 197; wanderings of Ulysses (*Od.* 9-12), 231; epic of character, 235, 238; divided into twenty-four books, 241, 244; the marvelous in, 251; Argos' recognition of Ulysses (*Od.* 17.300ff.), 257; episode made tolerable (*Od.* 13.63ff.), 263, 264-65, 287, 288. *See also Iliad*, above
- Horace: 326, 353, 355, 357, and Castelvetro, xvi, xviii; poets' duty, xvii, 335; and orators (*Ars Poet.* 101ff.), 39; nature and art (*Ars Poet.* 408ff.), 43-44; and poetic order (*Ars Poet.* 148ff.), xxviii, 75; artificially foreign words (*Carm.* 1.7), 205; boasters (*Epist.* 1.8-9), 216
- *Ars Poetica*, 180-81:87, and consistency (*Ars Poet.* 120-22), 170; chorus is universal (*Ars Poet.* 196-201), 186; the monster of *Ars Poet.*: 273
- Hyginus: 343, 344; Sisyphus (*Fab.* 201), 113; Aeolus (*Fab.* 283), 118; Achilles (*Fab.* 96), 124; Athamas (*Fab.* 5), 125; (*Fab.* 4.5), 158; recognition (*Fab.* 184), 126; lost tragedy (*Fab.* 243.1), 132; and Lynceus (*Fab.* 45), 135; Canace (*Fab.* 283), 158, 343, 348; Capaneus and Salmoneus (*Fab.* 61), 172; Bacchus and Phrixus (*Fab.* 2), 179; Merope (*Fab.* 184), 181; *Astronomica* 2.6:226
- Jean de la Taille: xl-xli, 328
- Josephus, Flavius: 346
- Justin: 342
- *Epitome* 38.3.11:32
- Juvenal: 226
- Laelius: 198
- Laertius, Diogenes: xiii, 337, 355
- Latini, Brunetto, Tesoretto: 21, 332
- Little Iliad* and *Cypria*: 222, 226, 227, 229, 232, 233, 239
- Livy: xl, 32, 89, 296, 328; the bull (Livy 35.21), 15; Tarquin (Livy 1.58), 123; Lucretia (Livy 1.58), 157, 180; Curtius (Livy 7.6), 159, 177, 180; Torquatus (Livy 8.6-7), 158, 180; Decii (Livy 8.9; 10.28), 180
- Lollius: 357
- Longueil: 294, 363
- Lucan: xx, xxi, 47, 96, 281, 339, 358, 359; introduces arts and sciences, 20; faults in *Pharsalia*, 75, 249; faulted by Quintilian, 185, 186; analogies and metaphors in *Pharsalia*, 191
- Lucian: xxv, 342; art of history, 4-5, 329; dialogues, 13, 96
- Lucretius: xx, 18, 19
- Lycophron, *Alexandra*: 109
- Lycurgus: 21, 332
- Macrobius: 105
- Maggi, Vincenzo: xiii, 334, 359
- Manilius: xx-xxi, 18, 19, 331
- Marguerite of Navarre: 93, 340
- Martial: 83, 269
- *Epigrams*: 12, 330, 339
- Marullo: 105, 341
- Melanippe: 169
- Michelangelo: *see* Buonarroti
- Milton, John: xli, 326
- Minturno: xv, xviii, 325, 327

- Mnasitheus: 311, 312, 366
 Molza, Francesco Maria: xlvi, 266, 359
 Musaeus: *Hero and Leander*: xxxv, 240-44
- Nicander: 18, 19, 331
 Nicodemus: xx
 Nonnus: 88
- Oppian: 25
 Origen: 294, 363
 Orosius: *Hist.* 4.39:149
 Ovid: a poem on fishes, 25; never attempted a metamorphosis as strange as the one in Dante's *Inf.* 25.97:93; stories stolen from by Ariosto, 105, 341; speakers in, 210; names in, 267, 269; seasons and hours, 281
 — *Fasti*: Cacus' death (*Fasti* 569ff.), 292
 — *Heroides*: similitudinary mode in, 34; deeds of horror (*Heroides* 11), 118, 349; Aeolus' misery (*Heroides* 11), 121; Canace (*Heroides* 11), 157; child of Canace and Macarues (*Heroides* 11.83ff.), 158; Briseis (*Heroides* 3.47ff.), 225
 — *Metamorphoses*: 63, 89, 91, 354, 355, 357, 360; Proteus (*Met.* 11.222-23), 110; Myrrha (*Met.* 10.324ff., 10.431ff.), 111; (*Met.* 10.471ff.), 119, 181; ignorance (*Met.* 7.694ff.; *Met.* 10.298ff.), 125; *terrigeneae* (*Met.* 3.118; 7.141), 128; method of escape (*Met.* 7.394), 139; Cyniras (*Met.* 10.298ff.), 159; Tereus, Procne, Philomela (*Met.* 6.667, 6.619ff.), 179, 180; Pyramus and Thisbe (*Met.* 4.55ff.), 180; names in (*Met.* 9.136ff., 12.39ff.), 267
 — *Tristia*: 359
- Panyasis: *Herculeid*: 224, 226, 357
 Pausan: painted men as worse than they are, 26
 Pazzi, Alessandro de': xiii, 334, 341, 347, 348, 358, 366, 367
 Peletier, Jacques: 73, 339
 Perino del Vaga: Florentine painter, 174, 175, 348
 Persius: 270, 360
 Petrarch, Francesco: xxiii, 326, 333, 342, 361; *Trionfo d'Amore*: xlv, 63, 361, and *Canz.* 8: 30; had known love, 38, 40; two classes of poets (*Epist. de rebus fam.* 1.7), 41; ranked below Dante, 82; *Trionfi* in terza rima, 83; *Canz.* 135: 99-100; stole *Canz.* 234 from Pliny the Younger, 105; *Canz.* 164: 190, 202, 204; metaphors in *Canz.* 60: 195; riddles (*Canz.* 134, 164), 202, 204; observing Dante's principles on speakers, 211; names in, 269, 270; repeating rhymes, 280; canzone on the Virgin, 280; *Trionfo della Castità*, 280; antipodes, 281; errors in, 280-81, 283, 288, 289, 293-94; metaphor of a prison (*Canz.* 72.16-20), 282; hardships of imprisonment (*Canz.* 206.32-36), 282; vision of Rome (*Trionfo della Fama*, 23-24), 292, 293; correctives to scandal (*Canz.* 28.65, 246), 294; and tradition (*Canz.* 128.42-48), 296; appropriate expressions (*Canz.* 23.156), 297
- Petrocchi, G: 361
 Petronius Arbitrator, *Satyricon*: 12
 Phidias: statue of Jove, 81
 Phocylides: 21, 332
 Photius, 342
 Pigna, Giovanni Battista: xix, xx, 326
 Pindar, *Isth.* 1.130, 7.10:128
 — Olympian odes, 296
 Plantus: 339
 Plato: 326, 327, 333, 347-48; and Castelvetro, xv, xviii; dialogues, 10-11, 13; language of, 21; manner of imitation (*Rep.* 392D-394D), 27; and the dithyramb (*Rep.* 3.394B), 28; not recognizing similitudinary mode, 31; some of dialogues combine narrative and dramatic modes, 35; to him attributed idea of divine madness, 37-38; *Phaedrus* 244A, 245A; *Ion* 534D; *Apology* of Socrates 22B-C: 38; forbade representation of tragedy in his republic, 56-57; tragedy and comedy products of same art (*Symposium* 223), 88; tragedy undermines moral habits, 155-56; division of the *Republic*, 244-45; Socrates in Plato's *Ion*, 278; phenomena (*Timaeus* 56-57), 319; and doctrine of purification, 321
 Plautus: xxiii, xxxix, xlv, 15, 70, 105,

- 136, 332, 342, 358, 366; prologue in, 209, 210; sometimes fails to observe unity of time, 244; *Miles Gloriosus*, 282; name of Hercules (*Amphitryon* 329, 746), 293; length of plays, 317
- Pliny: 25, 174, 332, 360
- Pliny the Younger: 83, 105, 339
- Plutarch: xl, 89, 328, 332, 340, 341, 342; testimony of Plutarch (*Symposiacs* 7.8), 10; Romulus and Tatius (*Rom.* 19.7), 147; Cato (*Cato* 70), 157, 180; Brutus (*Brutus* 52), 180; Cassius (*Brutus* 43), 180; Cleopatra (*Anthony* 85-86), 180; diction of Homer, 247
- Polygnotus: painted men as better than they are, 26
- Polyidus: 132
- Pontano, Giovanni: xx, 18, 19, 331, 361
- Propertius: 269, 271
- Pseudo-Plutarch: 358
- Pulci: xxiii, xlii, 48, 363
- Pythagoras, *Golden Verses*: 21
- Quintilian: 339, 349, 350, 353; and Castelvetro, xvi, xlv, xlviii, 335; and Aesop (*Inst. Or.* 5.11.19), 15; recommends schooling in astronomy and philosophy (*Inst. Or.* 1.4.4), 20; Plato moved by the spirit of Apollo (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.81), 21; and orators (*Inst. Or.* 6.2.25ff.), 38-39; and extemporaneous oratory (*Inst. Or.* 10.7), 42; nature and art (*Inst. Or.* 2.19), 43; and order (*Inst. Or.* 7.10.11), 75; commends Timanthes' painting (*Inst. Or.* 2.13.13), 174; denies name of poet to Lucan (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.90), 185; praises Euripides (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.68), 185-86; and "hypotheses" (*Inst. Or.* 3.5.7), 186 (3.5.9-10), 186; language and thought (*Inst. Or.* 8 Preface 22-24), 188; barbarisms (*Inst. Or.* 1.5.8), 204; diction and oratory (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.28-29), 206; names in (*Inst. Or.* 5.10.30-31), 269; the stage and the audience (*Inst. Or.* 11.3.4), 313
- Quintus Smyrnaeus: 74, 354, 357
- Raffaele Volaterrano: *see* Volaterrano, Raffaele
- Robertello, Francesco: xlii, xxxiv, 324, 328, 330, 334, 337, 338, 339, 341, 347, 348, 353, 355, 356, 358, 359, 366
- Sabellico, Marco Antonio: 92, 340
- Sadoletto: 294, 363
- Sallust: xl, 32, 89, 328, 356
- Sannazaro, Giacomo: 12, 274
- Scaliger, Julius Caesar: xv, xvii, xxxi, xxxix, xlvii, 67, 325, 327, 331, 339, 341, 358, 366
- Scipio: 198
- Segni, Bernardo: xiii, 359
- Seneca: xxiii, 105, 136, 298, 342
- *Medea*: 139, 277, 314
- *Oedipus*: 314
- *Troades*: 115
- Serenus: xx, 18, 19, 331
- Servius: 340, 342, 363
- Sidney, Philip: 326
- Silius Italicus: xx, 18, 19, 47, 331
- Socrates: 16
- Sophocles: 337, 347, 353; and matricide, 42; and Homer, 143-44; prologues of the third kind, 211; and authority of history and tradition, 294-95
- *Antigone*: compound plot, 114; plots of fourth type, 179; Haemon as an example, 182, 343
- *Electra*: 96, 136; recognition in, 116; and improbabilities, 260-62; historical error in, 291
- *Oedipus at Colonus*: complication and resolution in, 136
- *Oedipus the King*: simple and complex plots, 114-15, 144, 212, 343; recognition and reversal in, 116, 117, 182; complication and resolution in, 136; spectacle in, 149; plots of first type, 180; chorus in, 209; examples of improbabilities, 260-62; length of, 315, 316
- *Tyro*: 129, 344
- Sophron: mimes of, 10-11, 12, 13, 96, 330
- Sosistratus: 311, 312, 366
- Speroni, Sperone: 326
- Statius: 341, 354, 357, 362, condemned, 88; speakers in, 210
- *Achilleis*: 88, 91, 227, 281, 288, 362
- *Silvae*: 12
- *Thebais*: 89
- Suetonius: 89, 194, 198, 346

- Terence: xxiii, xxxix, 15, 70, 105, 136, 198, 342, 358; sometimes fails to observe unity of time, 244
 – *Andria*: xl, 63, 88
 – *Prologus* in, 209
 Theodectes: *Lynceus*: 117, 134–35
 – *Tydeus*: 132
 Theophrastus: 25, 67, 332
 Thespis: 337
 Tibullus: 269, 271
 Ticides: 271
 Titian: 272, 360
 Trogus Pompeius: xl, 32, 89, 328
 Tzetzes, John: *Chiliades* 4.867: 49–50
 Valerius Maximus: 341, 342, 343; confirms Cicero (*Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* 8.7.3), 21, 91, 159
 Valla, Giorgio: xiii
 Varchi, Benedetto: xvii, xviii, 327, 328
 Vegius, Maphaeus: 74
 Vettori, Pier: xiii, xiv, xxxiv, 324, 325, 328, 330, 332, 334, 337, 338, 341, 347–48, 350, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 364, 365, 366; denies epic in purely narrative mode, 28; and some ancient fables, 299–300
 Victorinus, *Ars Grammatica* 2.4: 49
 Vida, Girolamo: xlvii
 – *Christiad*: 88, 91
 Virgil: 326–27, 339, 354, 357, 358, 361, 363; prince of poets, xiv; Castelvetro's opinion of, xv, xx–xxi, xxx, xxxi, xlvii, 330, 342; ranked below Homer, xxx, xxxv, xlvii, 82; not to be commended, xlv, 297, 299; art of agriculture, 18; does not introduce arts and sciences, 20; intention of, 67; episodes in, 80, 82; stole from Homer, 105; let his preferences be known, 167; speakers in, 210, 249; not an imitator, 249; errors in, 249, 280, 292
 – *Aeneid*: and verisimilitude or probability, xxvi–xxvii, xxviii; heroic poem, 17; as generalized narrative, 33; as example, 54; miraculous revelations in (*Aen.* 1.353ff.), 63; characters in, 67; has proper ending, 74; order in, 75, 79–80; metamorphosis of ships (*Aen.* 9.107ff.), 80; episode of Dido, 80, 109, 242, 257, 281, 299, 342; description of Mt. Atlas (*Aen.* 4.246), 108; descents of Mercury (*Aen.* 1.300–1), 109; (4.246), 282; descent into Hades, 109; *Aen.* 6.392: 109; *Aen.* 8.626–28: 141, 345; death of Sychaeus (*Aen.* 1.353ff.), 143; following Homer (*Aen.* 1.92ff.), 169; appropriateness of character (*Aen.* 1.92ff., 7.803ff.), 169–70; and first type of invention (*Aen.* 5.746ff., 1.81ff.), 184; and second type of invention (*Aen.* 1.94ff.), 184; analogies in (*Aen.* 4.143–44, 1.498–99, 9.679–82), 191, 192, 351; simulative words (*Aen.* 4.93–95), 192; *Quos ego* (*Aen.* 1.135), 193; the chorus and role of Aeneas in Trojan war (*Aen.* 2.6), 208; praise of hero (*Aen.* 1.6–7), 211; Aeneas' recital of wanderings, 244; the marvelous and the pursuit of Turnus (*Aen.* 12.704–5, 730–31, 742–45, 758–62), 253–54; Cupid into Ascanius (*Aen.* 1.657ff.), 256, 281; transformation of ships into nymphs (*Aen.* 9.69ff.), 257, 259, 274, 281, 288, 295; intolerable episode (*Aen.* 3.5–6), 263; names in (*Aen.* 1.73ff.; 7.641ff.), 267; catalogue of forces (*Aen.* 7.641ff.), 267; Aeneas and the gods, 274; seasons and hours, 281; Cacus' death (*Aen.* 8.256ff.), 292; improbability in (*Aen.* 6.365–66), xlv, 293; oral tradition in (*Aen.* 9.80–83, 3.163–66, 3.414–16), 295–96; inappropriate expressions (*Aen.* 6.264–66), 297
 – *Ciris*: Scylla, 296
 – *Eclogues*: not heroic poem, 7; pastoral poetry, 17; introducing speaker (*Ecl.* 7), 29; *Novimus et qui te* (*Ecl.* 3.8), 193; the Latin *fugio* (*Ecl.* 1.4), 205; Scylla (*Ecl.* 6.74–77), 296
 – *Georgics*: 19, 361; agriculture and metre, 21; *Georg.* 4.453: 109; seamliness (*Georg.* 3.135–37), 192
 Volaterrano, Raffaele: 92, 340
 Vopiscus, C.J.C.S.: 355
 Xenarchus: mimes of, 10–11, 12, 13, 96, 330
 Xenophanes: 297, 364
 Zeuxis: 223, 300
 Zoilus: 360